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SPECIAL SECTION

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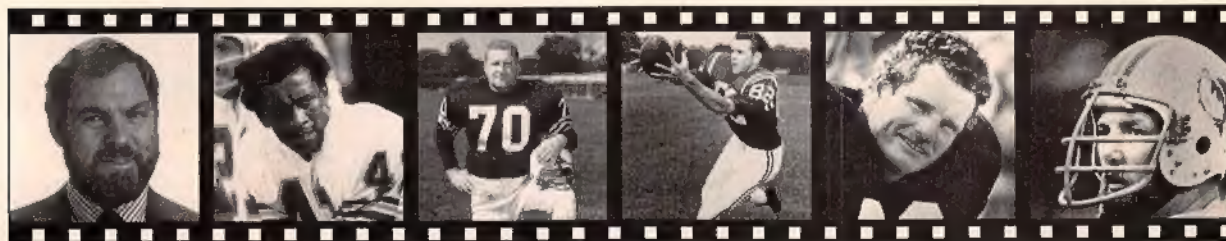
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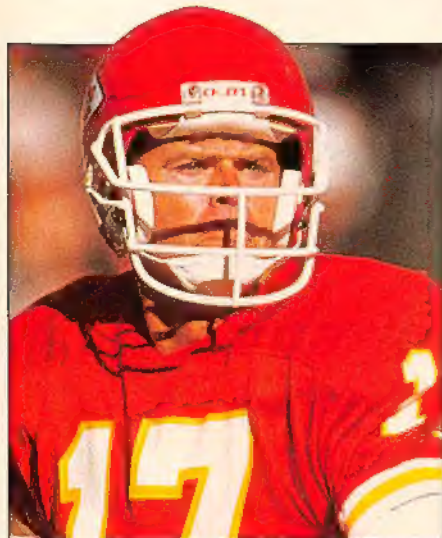
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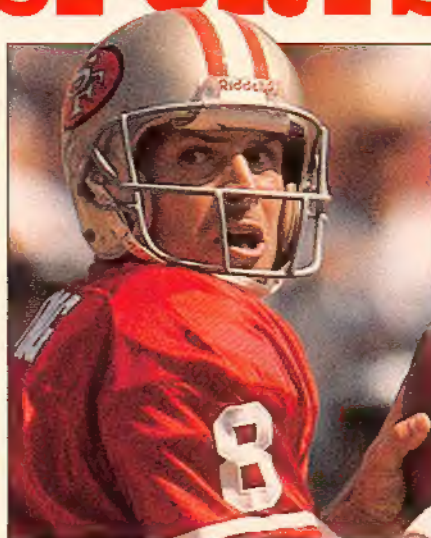


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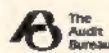
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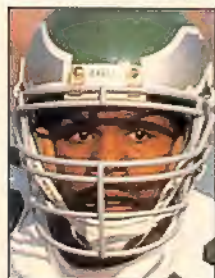


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## EDITOR'S NOTE

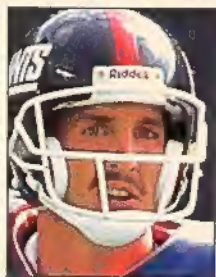
**A**FTER A RIGOROUS 16-GAME regular season, only a few select teams will be able to compete in postseason play for a chance to lay claim to the coveted National Football League championship. The playoffs are a pressure-filled couple of weeks leading up to the Super Bowl, where a few players will shine and many will falter, where accomplishments are magnified and mistakes aren't tolerated. Defense may be a team's backbone, but there's no denying that the quarterback is the single most important player on the field. In this issue, writer Greg Garber examines playoff pressure, with a look at the pressure quarterbacks, and tells you which QBs come through in the clutch (**Joe Montana, Steve DeBerg, Dan Marino**)



CUNNINGHAM

and those who have not played well in January (**Randall Cunningham, Jim Everett, Bobby Hebert**). With the help of INSIDE SPORTS' statistical formula, Garber evaluated each starting quarterback in the NFL and took the results to the league's top personnel men and players, who helped him group all QBs with playoff experience into four groups. Read the surprising results on Page 26.

The importance of depth at the quarterback position was never more apparent than when New York Giants quarterback **Jeff Hostetler** guided his team to the Super Bowl XXV victory over the Buffalo Bills. Hostetler's accomplishment was no small feat. He was the first back-up quarterback to win a Super Bowl. On Page 36 writer Bob Glauber explains how it has now become commonplace for back-ups to become NFL starters when the No. 1 passers are, for a variety of reasons, forced to the sidelines.



HOSTETLER

Perhaps the most unappreciated aspect of professional football is the performance of the special teams. Players such as the Giants' **Reyna Thompson** lay their bodies on the line in hopes of either giving their team's

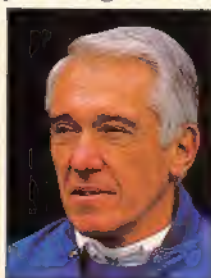


MARINO

better field position or preventing the opposition from scoring. Yet, in recent years, this once ignoble task has come to be considered an integral part of a team's overall play. Writer Sheldon Sanness looks at the growing recognition of the special teams, beginning on Page 44.

When the name **Steve DeBerg** is mentioned, the first image that comes to the minds of most NFL fans is that of a journeyman quarterback, but most people fail to recognize what an accomplished QB he is. His passing yardage totals surpass such notable Hall-of-Famers as **George Blanda, Joe Namath, and Bob Griese**—and he's still going strong. Join writer Edward Kiersh as he talks with the rejuvenated Chiefs quarterback in this month's interview on Page 18.

When **Marv Levy** stepped into the Buffalo Bills' head coaching job during the 1986 season, the Bills had won a woeful 6 of 41 games in the previous 2½ seasons. However, this Harvard graduate soon turned the team's fortunes around and has transformed the Bills into one of the league's most feared powerhouses. On Page 50 writer Scott Pitoniak discusses how the Bills' success in adopting innovative strategies such as the no-huddle offense stands in stark contrast to Levy's conservative, low-key personality.



LEVY

Turning our attention to professional hoops, the National Basketball Association is enjoying a period of great economic prosperity and high television ratings, and the future appears even brighter. Yet, amid the wealth of this enormous popularity, Paul Ladewski has a few suggestions to improve the league. Turn to Page 58 to find out what Paul has in mind.

*Michael K. Herbert*

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## CORNERING THE MARKET

### The Run-and-Shoot: It's Not for Everyone

POWERED BY THE RUN-AND-SHOOT offense, the Houston Cougars led the nation in total offense in 1989 and 1990 and entered the 1991 season having compiled a 31-6-1 record over their last 38 games. Yet, in this era of wide-open offense in the college game, very few teams are choosing to copy coach John Jenkins' dramatically efficient offensive scheme. Here are five opinions on why Houston's run-and-shoot is not emulated by more schools:

**It limits your defense.** "It's hard to build a defense around that offense," says Oklahoma Sooners defensive coordinator Tom Hayes. Hayes points out that run-and-shoot teams never practice against true tight ends. "Your defense has no chance to work against a power offense in practice, and that really hurts."

**It limits your options.** "The biggest problem with the run-and-shoot is that if you're ahead by nine points with 5:00 left in the game, a defense can put people inside against the run and *make* you throw the ball," says SMU coach and former Atlanta Falcons assistant Tom Rossley. Rossley, who installed the run-and-shoot at SMU three years ago as the Mustangs offensive coordinator under Forrest Gregg, has attempted to solve this problem by experimenting with two running backs in the run-and-shoot backfield instead of one. He's even pondered using a tight end.

**No one else has the recipe.** Houston does not share the secret of its success with interested college coaches during the offseason. "One of the reasons no one copies Houston's offense is because John Jenkins won't tell any of us what he's doing," says Baylor coach Grant Teaff. "So it's very hard to emulate. We're just kind of guessing at certain things." Hayes adds, "I'm not sure anyone in the world understands the system as thoroughly as John Jenkins, and that's a big part of it."

**It can make a bad football team look worse.** "In the Texas high school system we saw a lot of 1-9 and 0-10 teams give the offense a try—and they still wound up 1-9 and 0-10," says Mission High School coach Sonny Detmer, father of Ty Detmer, the 1990 Heisman Trophy winner. "The only difference was this: Instead of losing games 14-0 or 17-7, these schools that switched to the run-and-shoot began to lose games by scores of 52-6. The clock never runs with all those passes in a run-and-shoot system, and it only lengthens the game."

**It doesn't travel well.** "Houston plays in the Astrodome, and that gives them a 'sterile' atmosphere for at least six games a year,"



Houston and David Klingler [7] have faltered away from home.

says Hayes. "No wind, no weather, no rain. I've always felt that that's one advantage Houston had with that system. Other teams just can't afford to take that chance because they don't have as much control over the elements."

—BRAD BUCHHOLZ

## FIRIN' IN THE MOUNTAINS

### A Roundball Raconteur Rates the Handles

"HOT ROD" HUNDLEY, THE UTAH JAZZ'S PLAY-BY-PLAY television and radio announcer, received his nickname in 1955, during his freshman year at West Virginia University. Hot Rod averaged 40 points a game, and usually a good number of those came off moves and shots worthy of a Harlem Globetrotter, such as behind-the-back dribbles and hook shots from 20 feet. Once, on a foul shot at Madison Square Garden, he spun the ball on his finger and then punched the ball into the hoop.

Hot Rod has never lost his nickname—or the Southern twang in his voice—in more than 30 years in the professional game. Here are Hundley's five favorite nicknames for current and former NBA players:

1. "The Mailman" (Karl Malone).
2. "Dr. J" (Julius Erving).
3. "Pistol Pete" (Pete Maravich).
4. "Magic" (Earvin Johnson).
5. "The Big Dipper" (Wilt Chamberlain).

—DANIEL MARKOWITZ





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By BOB RUBIN

# Let's Turn the Tables And Criticize the Critics

**J**ACK CRAIG, A DESK man on the news side at *The Boston Globe*, was having lunch with the paper's sports editor one day in 1969. The National Football League and American Football League championship games were approaching, and the sports editor was lamenting that, given the huge TV audiences that would watch the games, any discrepancies between what the broadcasters said and his writers reported could make the paper look bad. Craig offhandedly remarked, "You ought to have somebody review the telecast."

"How about you?" the sports editor replied. Craig pondered for a moment, then agreed.

His columns were a huge hit with readers. *The Globe* was flooded with calls and mail. Not long afterward, he began to write about local sportscasting. Same response.

A beat was born, and it grew into a monster.

Nowadays virtually every major newspaper and sports magazine has a sports TV and radio critic. It's a necessity, given the explosive increase of sports on TV and the central role television has assumed in sports. Broadcasters spend so many hours in our homes they virtually become family. The exposure and money provided by TV have become the lifeblood of sports and have given TV enormous clout. Given the importance of the relationship between TV and sports, the responsibility to inform, analyze, and critique has fallen to the print media.

If you're a sports fan you've almost certainly read TV sports columns. What you



*TV's influence on and presentation of sports needs to be analyzed, but remember: Those who sit and watch are as fallible and as human as the people they critique.*

haven't read is what the subjects of those columns—broadcasters and network executives—think of their critics. That's what you're going to get here, but first a few general observations about the beat from someone who covered TV sports for *The Miami Herald* for more than a decade and has written on the subject for this publication nearly that long.

- Taste in sportscasters is, for the most part, as subjective as taste in movies, food, music, or the opposite sex. You may find Dick Vitale entertaining; I may find him obnoxious. You may find Pat Summerall boring; I may find him refreshingly understated. No one escapes criticism. You will even find people who are tired of John Madden's biff-bam-booms, though probably not many.

- It's sad to say, but with the exception of Rudy Martzke of *USA Today* [see sidebar], we critics don't have much influence on either our readers or our subjects. Readers make up their own minds. A perfect example is ABC's Frank Gifford, who has been ripped repeatedly over the years by the critics but is still going strong. People don't care if he gets a yard line or down wrong; they like him.

- The reaction of those being criticized usually ranges from indifference to irritation. There's respect—grudging, to be sure—for informed criticism from a writer who has done his homework, even if the subject disagrees with the opinions expressed. Occasionally the subject of a critique says he actually learned from it. However, there's disdain for inac-

curacy, ignorance, nitpicking, or what are perceived to be cheap shots or slashes for the sake of slashing, sins TV people say they encounter distressingly often.

- The quality of the work done by those who write about TV sports varies as widely as that of the people they cover. That means from outstanding to awful. One significant factor is the amount of time spent on the beat. The more experienced the writer, the better informed the writer will be. The better informed the writer, the more accurate and comprehensive the coverage.

Sports in media is too big and complex to cover properly as an afterthought. I know. I gave up the beat at *The Herald* because I had only one day a week to research and write, which I found wasn't enough time to do it justice in a daily paper.



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• Another variable is the degree of objectivity the writer brings to the table. To be painfully honest, we print people have our biases. There is envy of the high visibility of our TV brethren, and even greater envy of their enormous salaries. There is the stereotyping of sportscasters as vain, shallow, blow-dried pretty boys and girls. (Some are, but obviously not all.) There is resentment

of the money-driven power of TV and the preferential treatment it commands.

There is disdain for the superficiality of TV coverage. However, while the estimation is true, it ignores the facts. By its very nature, TV isn't designed for depth, and—even if it could deliver—people don't want depth. Print people should know that well. Newspapers everywhere are emulating

*USA Today's* "McNugget" approach to sports (and news) coverage: shorter stories, boxed factoids, and statistical pullouts, all evidence of shrinking reader attention spans. We can trace that trend directly to the influence of TV, and that tends to further heighten the resentment in many print folk.

The point to all this is that a TV sports critic has to do some soul searching to determine if and to what extent his work is influenced by these biases. If it's significant he does a disservice to his subjects, readers, and the beat.

Whatever they think in private, TV people (with the notable exception of Howard Cosell when he was working) tend to grin and bear it publicly over commentary in print. Lashing back would only be characterized as thin-skinned and provide critics with more ammunition. That doesn't seem fair, so we provide the rest of this space to broadcasters and TV executives, giving them a rare opportunity to critique their critics.

**Bob Costas (NBC):** "If you made a list of three guys who have benefited most from TV sports critics, I'd be one. I've been treated very well and have no ax to grind when I speak on the subject."

"I'd say the majority of writers are competent and responsible, but there's a certain percentage who come at it from a position of contempt for the medium and specialize in very shallow, uninformed, cheap-shot sort of criticisms. It's like a constant game of 'Gotcha!' They seem to write with a sneer. Constructive criticism from well-informed people is always respected and sometimes beneficial, but the cheap-shot variety is dismissed, and rightly so."

**Ted Shaker (CBS Sports executive producer):** "My reaction depends on who's doing the criticism. There are some I'll give more thought and credence to than others, but I don't give it too much weight, and the way I do that is by not reading it, which frustrates the hell out of our public relations department. I don't want to be influenced. I'd rather form my own opinions."

"What would I change about the criticism I do read? For one thing, I'd like critics to stop focusing on minutiae—someone mispronouncing a name or a screen going dark for a second—and look at the big picture. Did the commentators tell the story? Did the cameras capture it? Secondly, I wish they'd stop letting themselves be used by agents on behalf of their clients, or to get back at someone."

**Al Michaels (ABC):** "I've had probably 95% positive press in my career, and I'm appreciative, but I see writers who either get on or off a bandwagon and never change, and that's not fair. There are a couple of writers who love to lay it on me, but what

## The Couch Potato That Roars

**A**MAN'S IN SELECT COMPANY WHEN he's known by his first name alone. Along midtown Manhattan's Network Row, at ESPN headquarters in Bristol, Conn., and anywhere else television sports executives congregate, "Rudy" gets instant recognition. They may smile or curse when you say the name, but they know who you mean.

Rudy Martzke, who does four columns a week for *USA Today*, is unquestionably the most widely read and influential TV sports critic on the beat. His is the only daily national column, and his paper has a circulation of six million. However, his most important readership is the handful of people who run the TV sports business.

In addition to opinion, Martzke's column offers people in the business an opportunity to talk to each other, and that makes it special. The column is a forum used by executives, broadcasters, and agents to hype, knock, float trial balloons and shoot them down, agitate, attack, get even, flatter, con, gossip, schmooze, and kibitz. There's also news—often exclusive—about rights fees, negotiations, salaries, and imminent hires and fires. It's like the industry's bathroom wall.

The writing is ordinary, the coverage shallow and sometimes inaccurate (often unavoidable, given the different agendas of his sources), but everyone gives Martzke high marks for being a hard worker, and everyone reads him. That gives him clout. His calls get taken, his messages are returned. When a network wants to get the word out about something, Rudy is the first one contacted.

His Monday morning column, which wraps up the weekend's events, is the one everyone races to. It's a compilation of quickie opinions and awards, both good and bad. There's the best this, the worst that, the Oops Award for the most egregious foot-in-mouth comment by a broadcaster, and the Dreaded Glitch Award for technical boo boos. There's the Hustle Award, the Scoop Award, the Poop Award, and more. There is competition to win the good awards and avoid the bad, but just how intense the battles are is hard to say because network honchos are loath to admit that what is written matters very much to them.

"In my opinion he works very hard, and I respect the way he does his job, but I think we here at ABC are least caught up in the so-called 'Rudy factor,'" says ABC Sports senior vice president of production Dennis Lewin. On the other hand, CBS Sports executive

producer Ted Shaker acknowledges Martzke's allure. "In general, producers, directors, and announcers are drawn to his column like moths to a flame," he says. "They'd like to ignore it, but they can't. It's a curious phenomenon. I'm in my sixth year in this job, and for the first few I consciously wouldn't read [it] because I wanted to be able to say I didn't. I wanted to feel clean. Now I read it occasionally but go long stretches when I don't."

"When he gets you on the phone, you can't flim-flam him because he's touched a few bases and knows his stuff," says Terry O'Neil, NBC Sports executive producer. "But as disappointing as it might be to Rudy, we make our decisions without consulting him. Frankly, any network trying to communicate through Rudy's column is pretty weak and insecure."

Martzke is neither. He's just a TV sports junkie doing what he loves. A former publicist, he was doing a television sports column for the Gannett paper in Rochester, N.Y., when he was called to Gannett's brave new venture, *USA Today*, in 1982. At first his column ran only two or three times a week and meandered all over the sports section, but the feedback was so impressive they bumped up the frequency and anchored the position, giving his column the inside of Page 3.

Martzke prides himself on how hard he works. "I probably average 30 to 40 calls a day," he says. He's the ultimate couch potato on weekends, sitting, watching, switching, taping (only occasionally), writing, taking, and making calls, all to prepare his Monday morning column. "See, I actually care about this stuff," he says.

So do the guys he writes about, whether they'll admit it or not. "I know of episodes where there's been a screw-up and a guy in the truck will say, 'Geez, I hope Rudy didn't catch that,'" Martzke says. "And I know guys go out of their way to get the Best Line Award because they'll call me in the middle of the week and ask if I heard a particular line." In fact, Martzke says that at times he's taken aback by the impact of what he writes. "Guys call all shook up, and I tell them, 'Geez, it's just a line in a paper. Take it easy.' Others will call and ask what they can do to improve. And I'll sit there watching and know they changed something because of something I wrote."

"I never thought this column would have the impact it does. It shows [them] there's someone out there grading them. They want to do well, so maybe in a way I've helped things. See, I care about this stuff." □ —B.R.



can you do? It's not worth getting upset about. You shrug and move on.

"I think it's very important to have feedback. We all need a mirror held up, and I welcome intelligent, informed criticism, but a lot is incredibly superficial and written by guys who wouldn't know the difference between a producer and director if you asked them. You also see a lot of recirculated stuff that could be months or years old. Unfortunately, only about 10% of what I see is worth paying attention to."

**Terry O'Neil** (NBC Sports executive producer): "The quality of coverage covers the whole spectrum. Those who work at it have access to inside information because there are people in the business who will use them for their own self-interest. As with us, success or failure is usually a matter of how doggedly the information is pursued.

"It's probably advancing age, but I've learned not to be bothered by critics. You race to the newsstand to see what's been said about you, but if you take the highs and lows of daily reviews to heart your world would be one big roller-coaster ride that wouldn't let you do your job properly.

"What you do is look for something of value. As keen observers, the critics can sometimes notice something you hadn't seen yourself—sometimes we're too close—but it shouldn't happen too often if you're paying attention to your job."

**Terry Bradshaw** (CBS): "The network guys claim what the writers say doesn't influence them, but how are we to know? I do know certain critics' names keep coming up. Why is that if what they say doesn't matter?

"What gets me is why everyone in the business—and I mean *everyone*—gets so bent out of shape about what gets written. 'Did you see what so-and-so wrote?' They can't wait to read this garbage. Unbelievable! I say ----'em!"

**Frank Gifford** (ABC): "I've been on 'Monday Night' for 22 years. I've done seven Olympics. I'm high profile. They whack me and people tend to read it, and for some reason people take what's written as gospel, which it isn't. Sometimes I wonder about people's agendas. Writers search for nothing but negatives, and it's not only in sports. Sometimes it's almost to the point of being laughable.

"I make mistakes—we all do—and the criticism isn't all bad. I've learned from it over the years, though not recently. When it comes down to it, all that matters is when you walk out of that booth after a game proud of what you've done. That's a euphoria no critic can destroy." ■

*Contributing editor BOB RUBIN, along with media reviewers worldwide, will hold a celebration this spring honoring the invention of the remote channel changer.*



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## What is the lowest scoring game in NBA history?

**T. P., Detroit**

On November 22, 1950, the Fort Wayne Pistons edged the Minneapolis Lakers 19-18. The game was played four seasons before the 24-second clock became part of NBA rules. The Pistons scored eight, three, five, and three points by quarters; the Lakers had seven, six, four, and one. George Mikan, the Lakers center whose presence inspired Detroit's stalling tactics, had 15 points.



**Jimbo's heroics won him open admiration from aging athletes all across the U.S.**

## What American athlete has been named to the most Olympic teams?

**G. W., Potomac, Md.**

Two Americans have been named seven times. Fencer Norman Armitage made it in 1928, '32, '36, '40, '48, '52, and '56. He won a bronze medal in 1948. John Plumb, an equestrian, was named in 1960, '64, '68, '72, '76, '80, and '84. He won silver medals in '64, '68, and '72 and golds in '76 and '84.

## Who were the Detroit Cougars hockey team? Were they a forerunner of the Detroit Red Wings? I read about them in a hockey book, but it didn't say what happened to the Cougars.

**T. D., Minnetonka, Minn.**

In 1926 a group of Detroit businessmen purchased an NHL franchise and stocked it with players from the Victoria Cougars of the Western Hockey League. Although that team was called the Detroit Cougars, it played its first season in Windsor, Ontario.

In their second season the Cougars moved to the Olympia Stadium in Detroit. The next year they made the playoffs for the first time. In 1930 the Cougars became the Detroit Falcons. It wasn't until 1932, when James Norris bought the team, that it was named the Red Wings.

## Is Michael Jordan one of the better players to interview in the NBA? He seems like a nice guy from the times I have seen him on TV or read about him.

**Y. G., San Diego**

Jordan is considered one of the most cooperative players in the league. In fact, last year

the NBA Public Relations Directors Association voted for an All-Interview team, and Jordan was on it. His teammates were Charles Barkley (the leading vote-getter), Magic Johnson, Karl Malone, Doc Rivers, and coach Cotton Fitzsimmons of Phoenix.

## When Jimmy Connors did so well at the 1991 U.S. Open, was he the lowest ranked player ever to get that far?

**C. G., Dayton**

Connors was ranked 174th in the world entering the Open and needed a wild-card spot to get in, but he wasn't the lowest ranked player to make the semifinals of a Grand Slam event. In 1977 John McEnroe burst onto the tennis scene at Wimbledon by making the semifinals while ranked 233rd, and Bob Giltinan, No. 354, got to the semis at the Australian Open that same year.

## How many college basketball teams play in 20,000-seat arenas?

**D. W., Atlanta**

Seven teams play the majority, if not all, of their home games in arenas with at least a 20,000-seat capacity. Those schools are Syracuse (the 33,000-seat Carrier Dome), Tennessee (Thompson-Bowling's 24,535), UNC-Charlotte (23,338 in Charlotte Coliseum), North Carolina (21,572 in the Dean E. Smith Center), Seton Hall (20,039 at Meadowlands Arena), Kentucky (Rupp Arena's 23,000), and Brigham Young (23,000 at the Marriott Center).

## Why is there so much terminology and confusing jargon for football plays? Why can't the quarterback

## just call a simple down-and-out like we do in flag football?

**C. C., Hialeah, Fla.**

It's not the NFL—the National Football League—so why make it simple? Here's how complex the Atlanta Falcons have made their play-calling:

Each of the various formations and lineups is referred to by color first. The "red gun" offensive set is when the Falcons have four wide receivers in the game (red) and the quarterback is in the shotgun (gun). In the "green pair," there are three running backs, a tight end, and only one wide receiver.

"Green" is the formation; "pair" refers to the wings on both sides of the formation. Other situations include "blue" formations (three wide receivers) and regular formations (two running backs, two wide receivers, and a tight end).

## How many times have there been Olympic boycotts?

**S. L., Louisville**

There have been six Olympic boycotts. The first was in 1956, when Egypt, Iraq, and Lebanon did not attend the Games in Melbourne, Australia, to protest the Israeli-led takeover of the Suez Canal. Holland, Spain, and Switzerland also boycotted the Melbourne Games in '56 to protest the Soviet invasion of Hungary.

In 1964 Indonesia and North Korea sat out the Games in Tokyo to protest the International Olympic Committee ban of any participants of the Games of the New Emerging Forces held in Jakarta, Indonesia, in 1963. In 1976 many African nations boycotted the Montreal Games to protest the inclusion of New Zealand after a rugby team of that nation made a tour of South Africa.

The United States led a 1980 boycott of the Games in Moscow to protest the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. The Soviets led an Eastern bloc boycott of the 1984 Los Angeles Games, citing security worries. In 1988 Cuba, in support of North Korea, joined other communist nations in refusing to attend the Seoul Olympics. ■

*To uncover obscure sports facts, settle wagers, or unravel confusing trivia, send your questions to: Inside Out, 990 Grove Street, Evanston, Illinois 60201.*



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<b>The Rippingtons</b> —Curves Ahead (GRP) 426-874	<b>Rod Stewart</b> —Downtown Train/Greatest Hits—Selections From The Storyteller Anthology (Warner Bros.) 425-322	<b>Sting</b> —The Soul Cages (A&M) 424-440	<b>Gladys Knight</b> —Good Woman (MCA) 424-382	<b>Black Sabbath</b> —We Sold Our Soul For Rock 'N' Roll (Warner Bros.) 404-632
<b>Chick Corea Elektric Band</b> —Beneath The Mask (GRP) 426-886	<b>John Cougar Mellencamp</b> —Uh-Huh (Riva) 423-574	<b>The Doobie Brothers</b> —Brotherhood (Capitol) 421-297	<b>The Very Best Of Thin Lizzy</b> —Dedicated (Polydor) 426-098	<b>Lynyrd Skynyrd Band</b> —Skindyr's Innards Greatest Hits (MCA) 381-129
<b>Rhythm Syndicate</b> (Impact Records) 425-892	<b>Kentucky Headhunters</b> —Electric Barnyard (Mercury) 423-525	<b>Aretha Franklin</b> —What You See Is What You Sweat (Arista) 421-123	<b>The Steve Miller Band</b> —The Best Of 1968-1973 (Capitol) 425-702	<b>Alice Cooper</b> —Hey Stoopid (Epic) 422-063
<b>Lee Ritenour</b> —Lee Ritenour Collection (GRP) 425-876	<b>Def Leppard</b> —Pyromania (Mercury) 423-517	<b>3rd Bass</b> —Derevicks Of Dialect (Def Jam/Columbia) 420-992	<b>James Brown</b> —The CD Of JB (Sex Machine And Other Soul Classics) (Polydor) 425-025	<b>John Lennon/Yoko Ono</b> —Double Fantasy (Capitol) 380-774
<b>Outlaw Blood</b> —Outlaw Blood (Aico) 425-660	<b>Cinderella</b> —Heartbreak Station (Mercury) 423-426	<b>Ric Ocasek</b> —Freelall Zone (Warner Bros.) 420-307	<b>Rod Stewart</b> —Sing It Again Rod (Greatest Hits) (Mercury) 423-822	<b>Grateful Dead</b> —Skeletons From The Closet (Warner Bros.) 378-406
<b>Aaron Neville</b> —Warm Your Heart A&M 425-611	<b>Bon Jovi</b> —Blaze Of Glory/Young Guns II Original Soundtrack (Mercury) 423-400	<b>Hank Williams, Jr.</b> —Pure Hank (Warner Bros./Curb) 420-109	<b>Righteous Brothers</b> —The Very Best Of: Unchained Melody (Nerve) 423-772	<b>Roy Orbison</b> —The All-Time Hits Vols. 1 & 2 (Columbia Special Prod.) 377-945
<b>Harper Brothers</b> —Artistry (Nerve) 426-082	<b>Foreigner</b> —Unusual Heat (Atlantic) 423-160	<b>Sweet Obsession</b> —Sweet Obsession Too (Epic) 419-176	<b>The Moody Blues</b> —The Story Of The Moody Blues (Polydor) 423-756	<b>The Who</b> —Who's Better, Who's Best (MCA) 376-657
<b>Kiss</b> —Dressed To Kill (Casablanca) 424-798	<b>Vanilla Ice</b> —Extremely Live (SBK) 422-899	<b>De La Soul</b> —De La Soul Is Dead (Tommy Boy) 419-119	<b>Blind Faith</b> (Polydor) 423-673	<b>The Doors</b> (Elektra) 369-991
<b>The Moody Blues</b> —Keys Of The Kingdom (Threshold) 424-589	<b>Lisa Fischer</b> —So Intense (Elektra) 422-824	<b>Dianne Reeves</b> —I Remember (Blue Note) 418-756	<b>Bachman-Turner Overdrive</b> —Greatest Hits (Mercury) 423-657	<b>The Turtles</b> —20 Greatest Hits (Rhino) 369-090
<b>Eric Clapton</b> —Another Ticket (Polydor) 424-572	<b>Crowded House</b> —Woodface (Capitol) 422-253	<b>Rolling Stones</b> —Flashpoint (Rolling Stones Rec.) 418-715	<b>The Allman Brothers Band</b> —Brothers & Sisters (Polydor) 423-624	<b>Marvin Gaye</b> —Greatest Hits (Motown) 367-565
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<b>Oleta Adams</b> —Circle Of One (Fontana) 424-325	<b>Ziggy Marley &amp; The Melody Makers</b> —Jahmekya (Virgin) 422-139	<b>ZZ Top</b> —Recycler (Warner Bros.) 418-491	<b>The Monkees</b> —Greatest Hits (Arista) 408-203	<b>Tommy James &amp; The Shondells</b> —Anthology (Rhino) 405-746
<b>Anthrax</b> —Attack Of The Killer B's (Island) 424-119	<b>Diana Ross</b> —The Force Behind The Power (Motown) 422-089	<b>Steelheart</b> (MCA) 418-095	<b>Buddy Holly</b> —From The Org. Master Tapes (MCA) 348-110	<b>David Sanborn</b> —Another Hand (Elektra/Muscan) 423-103
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<b>Rush</b> —Chronicles (Greatest Hits) (Mercury) 423-780/393-785	<b>Frank Sinatra</b> —Capitol Collectors Series (Greatest Hits) (Capitol) 421-651	<b>Joe Walsh</b> —Ordinary Average Guy (Epic/Associated) 418-012		
<b>Tony! Toni! Toné!</b> —The Revival (Wing) 423-615	<b>Marc Cohn</b> (Atlantic) 421-552	<b>Bebe &amp; Cece Winans</b> —Different Lifestyles (Capitol) 423-137		
<b>Scorpions</b> —Crazy World (Mercury) 423-608	<b>L.A. Guns</b> —Hollywood Vampires (Polydor) 424-697			
<b>Trisha Yearwood</b> —Trisha Yearwood (MCA) 426-148				

<b>The Allman Brothers Band</b> —Shades Of Two Worlds (Epic) 422-212	<b>The Fabulous Thunderbirds</b> —Walk Talk Talk That Talk (Epic/Associated) 423-053
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By EDWARD KIERSH

# Steve DeBerg

*On his resiliency: 'You can't keep me dead and buried'*  
*On Roger Staubach: 'His teachings made bells go off for me'*  
*On the inevitable: 'If I was replaced now it wouldn't shock me'*

**T**HE NATIONAL FOOTBALL League's Freddy Krueger has been banished to many cemeteries, several premature graves, but Steve DeBerg, at 37 the NFL's oldest player (with the exception of the Jets' 40-year-old kicker, Pat Leahy), refuses to stay buried. Call him what you want—"Pops," "The Old Man," or just blood-curdling "Freddy"—but the Kansas City Chiefs quarterback continues to chalk up yardage and surpass the totals registered by such all-time greats as George Blanda, Joe Namath, and Bob Griese. Now playing better than at any time in his 15-year-career, the game's perennial bridesmaid, persistently forced to the bench to back up a younger phenom, has finally established himself as *numero uno*.

His newfound security has not come easily. DeBerg, the archetypal man with the suitcase, has been sent packing four times. Dallas picked him in the 10th round in 1977 but cut him in the preseason. He caught on with San Francisco, then bounced to Denver in '81, Tampa Bay in '84, and Kansas City in '88. All the moving around admittedly was "very tough" on his family—and on his ego. That's taken a beating, and he's had to be a survivor, constantly shrugging off the hurt of being abandoned for a prospect named Montana or Elway or Testaverde.

Even today, after he's led Kansas City to new respectability and surpassed 29,000 yards passing to rank in the NFL's all-time top 20, DeBerg is still dodging bullets. Few so-called experts want to believe this ancient can pass muster. "That's the name of the game in the NFL: [a player] has to prove himself every time out there," says DeBerg. In 1990 he did just that, completing 258 of 444 passes for 3,444 yards on his way to being the league's No. 3 quarterback.

However, the onetime 275th draft pick isn't bitter, not at all. Instead, he's Mr. Humble Pie, an unassuming all-American

type who's a throwback to the time when guys played football just for the love of competition. For that reason DeBerg comes across as truly likable, that rare personality who doesn't have his ego out of joint. Easy to talk with and always ready to insist modestly that he's been fortunate for his 15-year run, he's more than the game's best play-action quarterback. DeBerg is one Freddy K. we can all admire.

**INSIDE SPORTS:** You've been buried so many times by the media and fans, are you the Freddy Krueger of the NFL?

**STEVE DeBERG:** Well, I guess that's an apt description of me [laughing]. That whole thing started in Marty Schottenheimer's first year. I was a starter, then I was benched, then I was a starter again, and soon I was benched again. That's life in the NFL. Ron Jaworski and Steve Pelluer were starters, but then I finished off the season. I do keep coming back from the dead, or I'm always going off to other teams.

Yeah, gee, my whole career has been bouncing back from doom and destruction. Maybe I'm just a very persistent person. I don't have much give-up in me, so I guess when I'm buried and benched it makes me even more determined. So yeah, Freddy Krueger fits all right. I guess I'll keep lingering around and haunting people. You can't keep me dead and buried.

**IS:** You seem to be at the top of your game now—in fact, you appear to be hitting your prime—but does the starting and being benched ever get to you emotionally?

**SD:** Sure it does. The most difficult situation I've ever been involved with was in 1989 after I got benched and was replaced by Pelluer. I'm not saying he isn't a good quarterback, but the Chiefs signed him in the middle of the season, and 2½ weeks after he got here they started him ahead of me. He didn't have a clue on how the offense worked

or was supposed to function. For the Chiefs to make that decision—to in effect say that he'd be a better quarterback than myself—that was really the first and only time in my career that I gave serious thought to quitting. If a guy can come in and in a short time be No. 1, I thought it must be the time to give it up. I wasn't the happy camper back then.

**IS:** What were you thinking beyond that, beyond to hell with the Chiefs and the game?

**SD:** I never thought to hell with it. I just couldn't understand how the Chiefs could make that decision. It seemed so irrational, so nonsensical. Steve didn't have a chance. But one thing I have learned during these years is never try to figure how an organization makes coaching decisions. That could drive you crazy. These decisions just aren't always the stuff of rationality. I'll only say this particular decision really was tough for me to take.

**IS:** You felt it was unfair?

**SD:** I thought I had been going real well. I had been struggling the early part of the season, learning the system and all that. The coaching system was also learning us as players. We all struggled through that early part of the season, but then we were just starting to click offensively. Then they made that Pelluer move . . . I really had a tough time with that. A real tough time.

**IS:** All this seems to be behind you, so let's talk about the 1991 season. Even with your big numbers in 1990, did you still have to prove yourself this past year?

**SD:** Sure I did. That, too, is life in the NFL. No matter what my stats, I'm still No. 2, the back-up quarterback, to a lot of people. That's the name of the game in pro football. My job is on the line every time I go out on the field, and it's also true for a lot of guys in the NFL. A great number of guys.

The other factor is that when you're the oldest player in the NFL, at some point your







career is going to come to an end. The end. In the NFL there is *always* a youth movement going on, so I know what's coming eventually. How could I not?

**IS:** You're going to be 38 this January?

**SD:** That's right. I know the end is coming. They've been calling me "Pops" for quite awhile now. I enjoy it. My goal was to be able to play long enough to become the oldest player in the league. Now that I am, I'm surprised it's happened so soon, yet I'll never equal what Blanda did, playing till he was 49. Too bad!

**IS:** Because of your age—and your string of losing seasons up until recently—most people still feel the Chiefs need another quarterback.

**SD:** The Chiefs *do* need a quarterback of the future. They hoped Mike Elkins [or] Pelluer would step in and fill that role, but they haven't done that too often. There's definitely still a need for that quarterback. Throughout my career, when "the QB of the future" replaced me it was somewhat of a surprise. If I was replaced now it wouldn't shock me, primarily because of my age. This being an outstanding football team, they need someone to step in once I retire.

Let me also say that I would love to back up some outstanding young quarterback and help him learn the ropes. I want to ease his adjustment, but I don't know if that situation will materialize. I'd really like that opportunity because I feel I'd be good at teaching a youngster to fit in.

**IS:** So you're thinking of a coaching career?

**SD:** Yeah, that's definitely my goal right now. Football is my business. I really want to stay in the game.

**IS:** Before we bury Freddy again, though, let's talk about the good numbers you've put up recently. Why are you coming into your prime right now?

**SD:** There are a lot of factors at work here. I'm throwing far fewer interceptions because I've changed the way I'm throwing the football. It's become very effective for me.

**IS:** You changed your grip?

**SD:** No, I've altered the way I use my eyes right before I throw the ball. It's very technical; I don't know how to describe it. Let's say I'm reading defenses differently.

The other big key is that over the course of my career I've been on teams where the organization wasn't committed to me as a quarterback. The organization would say, "We have Steve DeBerg, and he's good, but we also have the next Joe Namath that's been drafted. He's going to be the quarterback of the future. We want him to succeed." So there's tremendous pressure from the owner and the fans to get this young franchise quarterback onto the field. As a result of those feelings, the offense would not be designed around any particular quar-

terback. The whole system of offense would thus be very general.

Now what has happened at Kansas City is that I'm established as the starting quarterback, and the offense has been molded around what I do best: the play-action part of the game. I'm just more confident now, and that also allows me to throw the long one, to bomb away.

**IS:** Confidence is that important to good numbers?

**SD:** I really do feel a lot more confident than ever before in my career. I'm settled in right now. I'm not looking behind my shoulder as I have had to do throughout my career. It's just a very awkward situation when the team doesn't know who the quarterback is.

**IS:** You don't enjoy competing with another guy for the No. 1 slot?

**SD:** That's not true. Having healthy competition for the job is very good. It keeps you focused; you prepare yourself as well as you

can physically and mentally. The other side is that when you have a close race for the quarterback position, the offense isn't designed for one particular guy. It's not specific or geared to an individual. That can lead to a lot of problems and confusion as to who the real leader is. But now the offense is molded in my image, and that can only sharpen my effectiveness.

**IS:** People still say you're not a Super Bowl quarterback.

**SD:** In a sense they are right. I haven't been to a Super Bowl. I haven't led a team there yet.

**IS:** Can you lead a team there? Do you have the talent to do that?

**SD:** I think I can. I understand the fans wondering if I can. I just haven't done it yet. But there are 26 teams that don't go to the Super Bowl and 27 that don't win one.

**IS:** What's it feel like to finally play for a winner?



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**SD:** It's just very exciting. I'm having more fun now than I ever did in my career. I've thrown for a lot of yards, a lot of touchdowns, but those personal statistics really don't mean much if you're not winning, and I haven't won throughout my career. I think I was 30-70 for most of my career until I really got rolling with Kansas City. So now I'm having fun. It's an exhilarating experience playing here now.

**IS:** Are the Chiefs a Super Bowl team?

**SD:** You bet. We have all the parts. To name just a few of our quality players, we have Stephone Paige, Christian [Okoye], Barry Word, Derrick Thomas. We've got the guys, no doubt about it.

**IS:** Do you get to call your own plays?

**SD:** We have Joe Pendry as our offensive coordinator calling plays. We have a very good working relationship, the best relationship I've ever had with a coach. He came with Schottenheimer in 1989, and we've gotten close. He listens to my ideas; he either throws them out or uses some of them. He definitely listens to me, so I have input. That's all I can ask for. The plays are signaled in to me, but I'm part of the process. This, too, is a big source of confidence for me.

**IS:** Do you see any similarities between the Chiefs' style of play and that of the Giants, especially the ball control aspect?



**'Hey, I'm a happy guy—and why shouldn't I be? I love football.'**

**SD:** I sure do. Ball control is Marty Schottenheimer's thing, his whole philosophy. Most teams in the NFL, in fact, would like to adopt the Giants' system, but they just don't have the players to play solid defense and ball control. Marty's thing is, don't kill yourself on offense: Don't turn the ball over, don't be making penalties. Mistakes really are killers.

One of the biggest reasons for our recent success is that we've done real well on the turnover ratio. This factor is key to winning in the NFL. Schottenheimer preaches and teaches that every day.

**IS:** Bill Walsh also had that low-risk, high-percentage philosophy: a lot of short passes to the backs, move the ball downfield. How big an influence was he on your career?

**SD:** He had the biggest influence on me, more than anyone else. He's just a great coach, and probably the best quarterback coach ever to be part of the game. He just has every phase of quarterbacking broken down further than any other coach I've been exposed to—and I certainly have been exposed to quite a number in my travels. Fortunately for me, I got to know coach Walsh at the beginning of my career, at a time when he could really make definite impressions. He was there at the beginning, and his teachings affected my whole career. When I was with him we also had Sam Wyche as the quarterback coach. That combination is really the reason for my longevity over all these years.

**IS:** You talked about the fun of winning. What about all those losing seasons and your emotions?

**SD:** It was draining, sure it was. You can have great stats, a good game, but if the team is losing, forget it. I'd get little satisfac-

# Stand Up, Stand Out.





tion from my performance when we were losing.

It's just something you have to overcome. It's no fun at all losing, and unfortunately the teams I've been on haven't had very good defenses. The Broncos had a good defense, and now Kansas City is tough on defense. In the NFL, [no] matter who the quarterback is, if you're not solid on D you won't win. When I was with Tampa Bay and the 49ers, we really weren't much on defense. That's why I lost a lot of games.

**IS:** When the Cowboys released you in 1977, did that affect you emotionally?

**SD:** Not really. The only time I was surprised was the trade from San Francisco to Denver, which turned out to be good for me. At the time Joe Montana was just starting to emerge as the starting quarterback, but the Niners weren't sure if he was ready yet, so they kept me there during training camp. It was obvious that Montana was penciled in as No. 1. When he was ready they traded me, but I really didn't think they would, not then. I felt they would want me as a back-up since there wasn't a strong back-up on the team. They kept Guy Benjamin instead of me, and to say the least, that was a big surprise.

I was still lucky. It didn't turn out badly for me, my [being] sent packing. I could've been Montana's back-up all these years and not accomplished a thing. I was fortunate to

move on. All the rest of the trades I asked for, so my confidence hasn't really slipped, except of course in 1989.

**IS:** Why do you say you were fortunate?

**SD:** I could've been sitting. Instead, I've been able to be associated with some of the best quarterbacks the game has ever seen, and to also put up yardage on other teams.

**IS:** Teams still didn't stick with you. Doesn't that bother you?

**SD:** What can I say? I've always been replaced by the "bright shining light." Who knows what I could've accomplished if I wasn't traded by San Francisco or Denver? You can't deal your own cards.

I haven't gotten much respect in the past, and that did bother me, but I am getting that recognition now. It's definitely satisfying for this to be happening, even if it is late in my career. Most guys get their respect early in their careers. I'm just different.

**IS:** Why do you say respect is coming your way?

**SD:** I'm playing with the best team I've ever played with. I'm their quarterback. Plus people are taking notice of me.

**IS:** In the 1990 playoffs the Chiefs were ahead of the Dolphins late into the game, but you still lost. It seemed as if you gave Okoye the ball less. Why?

**SD:** We certainly did outplay Miami for 54 minutes, but in the last six minutes they

outperformed us. I don't know what happened. It wasn't a case of not giving Christian the ball. In any event, everything we did this past year was primed to win the championship. The organization, the coaches, all our efforts were geared to just making up for that loss in 1990. It was a bitter loss to take, and it took me quite awhile to get over it.

**IS:** In 1989, when you came and took over the No. 1 quarterback slot, you didn't exactly win the starting role. Didn't you win it by default after Pelluer got hurt?

**SD:** That's true, I did win it by default. I was lucky, no doubt about it. I didn't win the job on my own. Who knows what would have happened if Steve didn't get hurt? Maybe I might have retired. Who knows?

**IS:** Did this "default" situation do anything to your mindset when you came back?

**SD:** It was definitely a situation where I didn't earn the job back, to start for the third time. It came about because of his injury, and that's not exactly a confidence builder. I was the guy who got lucky. Yet, I was prepared for this situation. I could thus take advantage of the situation, and I haven't looked back since. I was ready if I got a chance to play, and I'm proud of that.

**IS:** It sounds as if you were in the same situation Phil Simms found himself in.

**SD:** Look, you're paid to be a professional,

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and that means preparing yourself for any eventuality. When you're given the football you're supposed to perform. A lot of guys, when they are demoted and they don't feel it's a justifiable move, go into the tank. They say, "I'm not going to give them anything. I'm going to go out and party. I'm going to have a good time off the field." That hasn't been me. When a player gets into that negative frame of mind the next thing that happens is that he can't take advantage of an opportunity when it presents itself. That inability scares the hell out of me.

**IS:** Over the course of your career you've certainly been emotional after throwing touchdown passes.

**SD:** There's no better feeling inside. It's the ultimate sensation seeing those six points go up on the board. There've been some factors that have really made it special for me, [such as] my son, Drew, who's eight years old. I study, I prepare very hard during the regular season, so a lot of the time I sit with Drew. We watch game film together, and every week there is a different wrinkle to the Chiefs' plans—a double reverse pass, or something like that—and I'll show him the play. I'll make a signal for that play so he'll know it's coming when he's watching the game. It's a pretty neat feeling to give your son, who's in the stands, that secret signal, and then for the play to go for a touchdown. It's an awesome feeling. There's such a connection between us during those moments. That's what it is all about.

**IS:** Does your wife enjoy the game?

**SD:** She does.

**IS:** How long have you been married?

**SD:** Seventeen years. It's a long time, a lifetime. Longer than my career.

**IS:** You've been in the league 15 seasons. That's quite an achievement in itself.

**SD:** I never thought I'd make it this long, that I would surpass, yardagewise, guys such as Namath and Griese and Plunkett. No way! I didn't even think I'd play pro football for one year.

**IS:** Steve DeBerg doesn't sound like he has a mighty big ego. Why is that?

**SD:** Football has been a gift to me. I've been lucky to have what I've had. I love football, and I can't believe I'm living the lifestyle that I am. I love the game so much that I would consider playing it back in the old days, when they played for free. What kind of job can you have where there's so much fame, all this money, and six months off?

And think about it: I wasn't even supposed to make it in the NFL. I was just lucky to be exposed to the people I encountered, guys such as Bill Walsh and Roger Staubach.

**IS:** Why do you include Staubach in this list?

**SD:** He's the person I credit with getting me into the NFL. When I was drafted by the Cowboys I could throw the heck out of the ball, but I didn't understand the game. Roger took me under his wing and taught me a lot of subtleties about how to react in game situations. I also saw him perform, and he explained things to me as he was doing them. His teachings made bells go off for me.

He was also the first person I saw doing the one-handed ball fake. It took me 10 years before I ever tried that, but he's the reason I got real good at it. I've really developed that skill of late.

**IS:** While at San Francisco, did you get to know Montana?

**SD:** He's a great guy. I like everything about Joe. He was my best friend on the 49ers. We roomed together, talked a lot about the game. Joe is down to earth, very likable, very outgoing and personable.

**IS:** Did you also get to know Elway?

**SD:** Somewhat. A real competitive guy. I've been associated with some of the best QBs in the game, and that too is a satisfaction.

**IS:** How does Schottenheimer compare to Walsh?

**SD:** Both guys are outstanding coaches. The unique thing about Marty is his ability to coach the entire football team. Walsh was more quarterback-oriented, but Schottenheimer can coach any position. He's on the rules committee, so he understands every rule in detail. He is the most knowledgeable football man I have ever been exposed to for total football. Most coaches come from one direction and stay oriented that way. Not Marty. He can do it all.

**IS:** Do you like him?

**SD:** I do, a lot. He's very important to me in terms of that confidence building. He hasn't had to tell me I'm his guy. I can feel it.

**IS:** Has the quarterback position changed over the length of your career?

**SD:** It really has. A lot of it is in the rule changes and the technology. There is so much information available now: computers, the film they can break down and put into categories to study.

When I first got into the league I had to supplement my income during the off-season, but now teams train all year, and they pay you long enough so that you can make that commitment to training. The quarterback is definitely living a different life these days.

**IS:** Is there a player in the league you especially admire?

**SD:** I can't say there is one, but I do respect what Montana has accomplished. All those Super Bowl wins—that's what quarterbacking is all about.

**IS:** He certainly is in the media spotlight. Kansas City, on the other hand, doesn't seem like a place where you would get much attention or endorsement deals.

**SD:** You're right.

**IS:** You're said to have "Kennedy good looks." Do you miss not getting the endorsement deals?

**SD:** I have a few things in K.C. I've done a few commercials.

**IS:** Aren't you at a disadvantage in Kansas City?

**SD:** If endorsement deals were what I wanted I would be, but it's no big deal to me. I get recognized more than I want.

**IS:** Isn't it a money loss?

**SD:** I rather earn my money playing football. I'm not in this game to draw down TV spots, shoe deals, whatever. I play because I love the game.

**IS:** How long do you think you can keep playing?

**SD:** I really don't know. The No. 1 factor is not getting injured. It would be very tough for me to recover from a major injury.

**IS:** How often do you think about retiring?

**SD:** The real thought is *where* I'm going to retire. Throughout my career I've lived in so many outstanding places in this country. I have a wide variety of choices, and I really don't know where I'm going to settle. Tampa, the Rockies, on a beach in California . . . I don't know. I'm just going to live the life of Riley.

**IS:** Sounds like no matter what happens, these last years of your career have been icing on a very delicious cake.

**SD:** I can't lose, really. I've had a good time. I've done a lot after I thought I wouldn't do all that much. I've even fooled some people. The NFL has been the life. I'm a happy guy. Why shouldn't I be? I love football. ■

*If DeBerg is the Freddy Krueger of the NFL, EDWARD KIERSH must be the frequent flier of journalism. Ed's interview with Rick Pitino in New York ran in December.*



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# BIG- GAME HUNTERS

*The unflappable Joe Montana isn't around to perform his usual postseason magic. But our pressure ratings tell you which NFL quarterbacks will get the job done—and which big-name, big-money passers will wilt when the heat is on*

By GREG GARBER





**NFL**  
**PLAYOFF**  
**PREVIEW**





**G**EORGE YOUNG knows a little something about winning in the National Football League. He spent a decade working with Don Shula, the league's winningest active coach, in Baltimore and Miami. As the New York Giants general manager, Young transformed a struggling franchise into a legitimate power and has won the NFL's executive of the year award three times in the last seven seasons.

While defense is the bedrock of most successful teams, the quarterback is the single most influential player on the field. Young is fortunate to have two quality quarterbacks who are also proven winners. Not only do Phil Simms and Jeff Hostetler perform as expected against the Tampa Bays, San Diegos, and New Englands of the league, but they have the rare ability to raise the level of their games when the stakes rise dramatically in December and January.

There are four active quarterbacks who have won Super Bowls, and Simms and Hostetler are two of them. They are not always technically perfect, but in the lexicon of football coaches, they usually manage to "get it done." Pressure quarterbacks just get it done.



**Kelly stands tall in the pocket but comes up short in the clutch.**

"A lot of guys have played quarterback, but there haven't been many who could will the ball down the field in critical situations," says Young. "If you have a pressure quarterback you're going to have a chance in the playoffs. The great example is Billy Kilmer. He was on a team with a Hall-of-Famer, with Sonny Jurgensen, but he wound up being the quarterback. He found a way to score



**Unstoppable? Krieg has performed like a Montana by the Sound.**

touchdowns. He didn't get it done artistically, but that's not what counts.

"They said Bobby Layne didn't throw a tight spiral. Well, he threw it end over end all the way into the Hall of Fame."

In order to identify those quarterbacks who rise to the occasion under duress, as well as those who, conversely, seem to wilt when the heat is on, the discerning observer looks beneath the surface. In an effort to reveal those who step up and those who step back at crunch time, *INSIDE SPORTS* has developed a formula that comes closer than any before to analyzing quarterbacks' performances in "pressure games"—not just playoff contests, but also late-season games in which the stakes are high. We took our statistical results to NFL personnel men, administrators, and players, whose input helped us categorize the active quarterbacks with playoff experience into four groups. The results will startle even the most devoted fan.

For instance: It's common knowledge that

San Francisco's Joe Montana stands alone as the game's most lethal triggerman in big games, but did you know that Seattle's Dave Krieg and Kansas City's Steve DeBerg are right behind him? Believe it or not, Krieg and DeBerg are nearly in Montana's class in the clutch. Bubby Brister, maligned even in Pittsburgh, is another get-it-done guy. Strange but true.

For instance: Buffalo's Jim Kelly and Denver's John Elway, two luminaries from the famed quarterback Class of 1983, are merely mediocre when push comes to shove. Like the Minnesota Vikings, they are a combined 0-4 in Super Bowl appearances. Their combined record in pressure games is a middling 28-30.

For instance: Pro Bowl quarterbacks Jim Everett of the Los Angeles Rams and Philadelphia's Randall Cunningham are downright ugly in the crunch. Their combined playoff record is 2-6, and in those games they have thrown seven touchdown passes and 16 interceptions. Moreover, their



respective passer ratings tumble an average of 14 points in pressure vs. nonpressure games.

As Yogi Berra would say, Whoda thunk it? "You are talking about something that you really can't explain," says Buffalo general manager Bill Polian, whose team opposed Young's in Super Bowl XXV. "Namath had it oozing out of every pore; Richard Todd didn't. It's an intangible, something I think you're born with."

There are 22 quarterbacks in the Hall of Fame, and most of them had that little extra sizzle when their teams fell out of the frying pan and into the fire. Otto Graham led Cleveland to the championship game for 10

consecutive seasons and won seven times. Pittsburgh's Terry Bradshaw, like Montana, was 4-0 in the Super Bowl. In 10 playoff games Green Bay's Bart Starr compiled a can't-touch-this passer rating of 104.8. In the crucible of the postseason, when the damage wrought by interceptions is magnified, Starr threw only three in 213 passing attempts, history's lowest percentage. Dallas' Roger Staubach was the master of the two-minute drill, but he also threw 24 touchdown passes in 20 playoff games, a total surpassed only by Montana and Bradshaw.

Those players were all blessed with considerable physical tools. Though Johnny

Unitas wasn't quite so fortunate in the physique department, he wound up throwing for more than 40,000 yards. How? "Guts," says Cleveland executive vice president Ernie Accorsi, who worked for the



**When the pressure's on, Marino comes out with his arm afire.**

Baltimore Colts when Unitas was still there. "John always said that the biggest mistake people make is judging quarterbacks like other players. The question isn't arm strength or speed; it's does he move the team down the field and into the endzone?"

"I remember one time late in John's career [when] he had pulled another game out, and the great sports writer Red Smith said: 'He used to do it like Bob Feller, and now he does it like Eddie Lopat.'" Even when Unitas lost his fastball, he still had enough guile to get them out with junk. The great ones always find a way to get it done.

Exactly how did we determine the identities of today's great and not-so-great pressure quarterbacks? Pay attention, because this gets a little complicated. Even with its inherent flaws, the NFL's passer rating formula remains the most workable statistical standard for judging quarterbacks. Attempts, completions, yards, touchdowns, and interceptions are factored to produce a rating of say, 88.5, which is Dan Marino's career average.

It would be easy to compare a quarterback's passer rating in regular-season games vs. playoff games, but we carried the concept a bit further to include "pressure games," those regular-season games in which a team has a record of .500 or better, when a victory or loss can mean the difference between a playoff berth and a seat in front of the TV in January [see charts for further explanation]. To help round out each quarterback's profile, we've included the



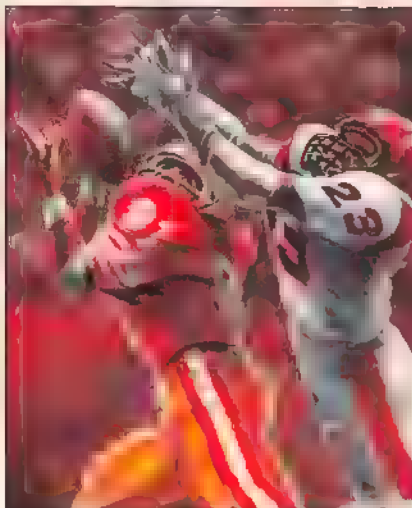
**When the weather turns cold in Denver, so does Elway's arm.**

SPECIAL ADVERTISING FEATURE

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PRESENTS

## BIG SUPER BOWL GAMES



**W**hen Joe Montana and the San Francisco 49ers lined up on January 22, 1989, it had been seven years since a title game had been decided by fewer than 10 points. In front of 75,129 at Miami's Joe Robbie Stadium, Montana's charges were down 16-13 and faced a daunting task. With only 3:10 left to play, they were buried at their own 8-yard line. Worse, the Cincinnati Bengals had surrendered only one touchdown that day.

Calling his own plays, Montana drove the 49ers down the field. He relied primarily on passes to Jerry Rice but handed off to Roger Craig and Tom Rathman enough to keep the Bengals off-balance. An eight-yard toss to Craig over the middle left the Niners with a second-and-two at the Cincinnati 10. San Francisco's second timeout stopped the clock at 0:39.

In the huddle Montana called "20 Half-back Curl X-up," which made Craig the primary target. However, when Craig was double-covered, Joe Cool found John Taylor slashing toward the back of the endzone. Montana fired a strike for the score to win his third NFL championship, 20-16.

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**NFL**  
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won-lost record for his team in both the pressure and nonpressure games in which he played.

That said, remember that passer ratings and won-lost figures cannot account for dropped passes or great catches, missed blocks or sacks avoided, bad decisions or the quality of the quarterback's supporting cast on offense. Also keep in mind that quarterbacks play against longer odds in pressure games, which makes matching their nonpressure passer rating that much more difficult. Generally speaking, the weather is worse later in the season, so it's harder to play well just when there is more at stake. In the playoffs a quarterback faces better teams, which quite often have better defenses. All of this makes you appreciate Montana even more, if that's possible.

### THE ETHEREAL

**Joe Montana, 49ers.** You already know the story: Battling a severe case of hypothermia, Montana rallied Notre Dame to three fourth-quarter touchdowns to beat Houston on the last play of the 1979 Cotton Bowl. He fell all the way to the third round of the NFL draft, but three years later, in the



**The pressure that can rattle Joe Cool hasn't been found yet.**

1981 NFC Championship Game, he and Dwight Clark opened the San Francisco 49ers' golden era with a last-second scramble and grab now known simply as "The Catch." That season Montana led the 49ers to the first of four Super Bowl victories. He's all by himself in pressure games.

### NONPRESSURE PERFORMANCE

Rank	Player	W-L-T	Comp.	Atts.	Pct.	Yds.	Avg. Gain	TDs	Ints.	Rating
1.	Joe Montana	71-24	20.0	31.5	.641	246.4	7.81	164	81	95.0
2.	Jim Kelly	31-10	17.7	28.8	.613	227.5	7.89	67	40	90.9
3.	Mark Rypien	12-11	18.1	32.2	.564	246.1	7.65	46	20	90.4
4.	Boomer Esiason	37-25	15.9	27.3	.582	218.6	8.00	100	59	89.1
5.	Dan Marino	52-27	20.3	33.8	.601	254.8	7.54	152	86	89.1
6.	Warren Moon	23-16	18.6	31.8	.586	246.6	7.76	73	41	89.1
7.	Jim Everett	16-10	18.2	30.8	.589	245.0	7.94	46	28	88.8
8.	Ken O'Brien	34-23-1	16.3	27.1	.600	198.3	7.31	71	34	88.5
9.	Bobby Hebert	21-11	17.0	28.0	.606	207.1	7.39	42	21	84.6
10.	Jim McMahon	21-3	15.2	25.5	.596	191.5	7.52	29	21	84.6
11.	Randall Cunningham	22-14	18.8	33.4	.562	232.1	6.96	59	31	83.5
12.	Bernie Kosar	28-17-1	17.5	29.2	.598	211.0	7.22	50	37	82.9
13.	Steve DeBerg	22-14-1	13.3	23.1	.578	176.1	7.64	36	28	82.5
14.	Phil Simms	50-21	16.9	29.9	.564	223.0	7.45	88	65	81.2
15.	Dave Krieg	39-26	15.5	27.2	.570	197.6	7.27	96	79	79.3
16.	Bubby Brister	11-11	14.5	25.4	.573	172.8	6.81	22	18	78.0
17.	Wade Wilson	22-12	11.6	20.5	.566	158.2	7.71	25	28	76.6
18.	John Elway	50-23	15.7	29.5	.534	203.0	6.89	87	74	74.5
19.	Mike Tomczak	30-13	7.3	13.9	.527	100.3	7.21	28	31	70.0
20.	Jay Schroeder	28-12	13.6	27.4	.497	158.4	5.77	47	36	68.2

A pressure game is any playoff game or any regular-season game in which a team has a record of .500 or better (and presumably is playing for playoff berth or home-field advantage in the postseason). A nonpressure game is any regular-season game that is not a pressure game. Statistics were compiled only for those seasons in which the quarterback played in at least one pressure game; otherwise, that season is thrown out. Stats don't include the '91 season. Quarterbacks eligible for our ratings are those current starters who, entering the 1991 season, had started in at least 12 nonpressure games and at least five pressure games, at least one of which had to have been a playoff game. For a back-up quarterback to qualify, he had to meet all of the above criteria, and he also had to have started at least one playoff game in the past three seasons. The categories (all of the following are for nonpressure games only): W-L-T the team's record in games in which the quarterback played; Comp. = completions per game; Atts. = pass attempts per game; Pct. = completion percentage; Yds. = passing yards per game; Avg. gain = average gain per pass attempt; TDs = touchdown passes; Ints. = interceptions; Rating = NFL passer rating.





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**When the pressure is deafening, Simms' boo-birds hush up.**



Listen to Tim Rooney, the Giants director of pro personnel: "Great players not only play to their ability, but they maintain their confidence level in the big games. You get a guy like Montana, and there are people around him, like Jerry Rice, who respond positively to his confidence, his attitude, his preparation level. Defensively, you have people who are responding to playing Joe Montana, and that's tough. They're on an island, and they lose confidence, and that plays right into his hands. He'll beat you almost every time."

That's literally true. Montana's record in pressure games is an astounding 42-9, a winning percentage of .824. This compares to a not-so-shabby 71-24 mark (.747) in nonpressure games. Montana's passer rating in pressure games is 94.9, just shy of his searing 95.0 figure for nonpressure games. In 19 playoff games Montana's passer rating is 98.2, and he's thrown 39 touchdown passes. Bradshaw, who also played in 19 postseason games, is a distant second with 30.

"If you and I went out to play Joe in anything—running through the forest or something—he'd find a way to whip us," says Allan Webb, the 49ers director of pro scouting. "He doesn't get uptight about it, and you do. That's why he's a great clutch player."

## THE GOOD

**Phil Simms, Giants.** In some ways Simms is the quintessential get-it-done guy. He's played in one Super Bowl, and he was the Giants' history-making most valuable player. He's played in one Pro Bowl, and he

threw three touchdown passes in eight minutes to win that MVP award.

Simms' career passer rating in regular-season games is a fairly pedestrian 77.0, but in the playoffs the number jumps to 90.0. In the Giants' three postseason games in 1986 Simms threw eight touchdown passes and no interceptions. In Super Bowl XXI he completed 22 of 25 passes against Denver for the best single-game playoff completion percentage ever (.880). The fans who routinely booed Simms at Giants Stadium might be surprised to learn that he has the second lowest playoff interception percentage of all time. In pressure games Simms' rating improves from 81.2 to 82.3, and his record is 19-10.

**Dave Krieg, Seahawks.** No, this is not an error. Through 11 anonymous seasons in Seattle, Krieg of mighty Milton College has been enormously productive, especially when the games mean something. Consider his 39-26 record (.600) in nonpressure games and his 22-13 mark (.629) in pressure games. Likewise, his passer rating climbs sharply, from 79.3 to 90.9, when the heat is on. His differential of plus-11.6 ties him with DeBerg for the best active figure.

In nonpressure games Krieg's rate of touchdowns to interceptions was 96 to 79

(1.215). In pressure games it's 69 to 36, almost 2-to-1. "Those numbers are better than I thought," says one pro scout. "I guess we have to re-evaluate this guy."

**Steve DeBerg, Chiefs.** Remember when DeBerg played in last year's playoff game against Miami with his mangled finger in a cumbersome cast? That, in essence, is DeBerg, who at 36 had his best season in 1990 for Kansas City. "The longer you last in this league, the smarter you are," Young says. "DeBerg has outlasted most of them."

DeBerg's nonpressure rating is a modest 82.5, but pressure games reveal a 94.1 figure, better than anyone except Montana. DeBerg is efficient in big games, completing 61.6% of his passes and throwing only seven interceptions, balanced by 15 touchdowns. The downside? DeBerg is only 5-6 in pressure games.

**Dan Marino, Dolphins.** Before Randall Cunningham surfaced in Philadelphia, Marino was probably the most valuable player to his respective team. He's second to Montana on the all-time passer rating list, at 88.5. His differential in pressure and nonpressure games is an admirable minus-.2, and his pressure won-lost record is 20-12. Marino has played in eight playoff games and thrown at least one touchdown pass in each.



**The usually bright Moon can go into an eclipse in the clutch.**



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"He's got the great numbers, but more than that, he's there when they need him," says a league personnel man. "Most guys can't say that."

**Bernie Kosar, Browns.** Sure, he's geeky, and that sidearm delivery leaves personnel men grimacing, but Kosar is a clutch player. He's got one of the best pressure/nonpressure differentials (plus-.9) and a 16-10 record in Cleveland's big games. The best indicator of Kosar's performance is his touchdown-to-interception ratio. In nonpressure games the numbers are 50 and 37, but in pressure games Kosar has thrown 40 touchdown passes, compared to only 20 interceptions.

"You get in those situations and you try to tell yourself it's just another game," says Kosar. "Sometimes you can fool yourself a little."

**Wade Wilson, Vikings.** His numbers surprised more than a few NFL types. Wilson's nonpressure rating is 76.6, and his won-lost record is 22-12. However, in pressure games the Minnesota signalcaller steps up with a 80.9 rating for a differential of plus-4.3. Wilson's 12-10 pressure record is more indicative of the Vikings' propensity to self-destruct than any flaw in his performance.

**Jeff Hostetler, Giants.** With only five nonpressure games Hostetler doesn't qualify for the list, but based on the early returns he deserves to be there. In the five games he started last season for the Giants after Simms went down—pressure games all—

Hostetler completed 70 of 122 passes (.574) for 823 yards and five touchdowns. He did not throw an interception. Hostetler also ran 34 times for 177 yards, including two touchdowns. In seven career pressure games Hostetler's passer rating is a superb 92.4, better than all but Montana and DeBerg. He's also 3-0 in playoff games.

**Bubby Brister, Steelers.** Surprise. The Bubmeister rises to the big occasion. His passer rating differential is an insignificant minus-.5, and his won-lost record in Pittsburgh's pressure games is an admirable 6-3. He's only 11-11 in non-pressure games.

"Mental toughness is the most important thing you can have," Brister says. "You've got to hang in there and make the play, even if you're going to get blasted."

## THE MEDIOCRE

**Jim Kelly, Bills.** This one's a tough call. Here's the guy with the third all-time passer rating (85.8), but there's no denying that when the going gets tough he drops down a notch. Kelly's nonpressure rating is a scin-



**Not quite a rip-roaring success, Rypien at least has picked up a few clutch "W's."**

tilating 90.9, second only to Montana. His record in those games is 31-10 (.756). In pressure games, however, Kelly's rating slides to 78.6, and the record is 8-12 (.400). A telling statistic: Kelly has thrown 67 touchdown passes in 41 nonpressure games. The total in 20 pressure games is 26. "That," says one scout, "isn't so great."

**John Elway, Broncos.** Yes, he got Denver to the Super Bowl three times in four years—but the Broncos lost all three games, and Elway had only two touchdown passes to go with six interceptions. His rating differential of minus-3.2 isn't bad, but his 20-18 record in pressure games is less than compelling.

**Warren Moon, Oilers.** Maybe The Moon Man just needs a defense to move to the next level, something that seems to be quite possible this season in Houston. Moon had his best season a year ago, but a dislocated thumb took him out in Week 15. Overall, his rating falls by 6.2 in pressure games, and his won-lost record is 11-9.

**Boomer Esiason, Bengals.** Here's another classic passer who is hamstrung by his regular-season prowess. Esiason's career passer rating is 85.8, tying him for third with Kelly on the all-time list. The rating falls from 89.1 in nonpressure games to 83.8 in pressure games, though, and in the playoffs Esiason and Cincinnati are 2-2. In his only Super Bowl appearance Esiason completed just 11 of 25 passes for 144 yards, no touchdowns, and one interception.

**Mark Rypien, Redskins.** The Washington quarterback represents the biggest in-

## PRESSURE PERFORMANCE

Rank	Player	W-L-T	Comp.	Atts.	Pct.	Yds.	Avg. Gain	TDs	Ints.	Rating
1.	Joe Montana	42-9	18.9	30.1	.630	232.3	7.72	84	37	94.9
2.	Steve DeBerg	5-6	15.9	25.8	.616	206.4	7.99	15	7	94.1
3.	Dave Krieg	22-13	17.4	29.5	.589	226.9	7.68	69	36	90.9
4.	Dan Marino	20-12	21.7	38.0	.570	283.4	7.45	79	39	88.9
5.	Boomer Esiason	12-10	13.4	26.1	.512	208.1	7.98	35	20	83.8
6.	Bernie Kosar	16-10	18.3	32.9	.557	232.3	7.07	40	20	83.8
7.	Warren Moon	11-9	18.3	32.6	.561	257.0	7.88	26	19	82.9
8.	Phil Simms	19-10	16.3	27.4	.594	196.2	7.16	37	28	82.3
9.	Wade Wilson	12-10	14.9	27.3	.546	206.8	7.57	27	19	80.9
10.	Jim Kelly	8-12	17.8	31.3	.570	223.7	7.16	26	22	78.6
11.	Bubby Brister	6-3	12.1	22.8	.532	174.3	7.65	7	6	77.5
12.	Jim Everett	10-7	17.6	32.7	.540	237.8	7.27	29	26	75.2
13.	Ken O'Brien	3-11	18.8	32.3	.582	216.2	6.70	14	17	73.1
14.	Jim McMahon	10-4	9.2	17.4	.531	129.4	7.46	7	9	71.6
15.	John Elway	20-18	17.6	32.9	.535	237.2	7.21	46	53	71.3
16.	Mark Rypien	8-4	15.4	27.3	.566	206.3	7.57	13	19	69.8
17.	Randall Cunningham	9-6	16.9	31.9	.528	211.3	6.62	16	18	69.1
18.	Jay Schroeder	16-8	14.6	28.8	.509	199.4	6.93	31	32	69.0
19.	Bobby Hebert	5-5	13.1	24.7	.530	141.8	5.74	9	10	65.5
20.	Mike Tomczak	11-8	9.7	20.6	.471	133.2	6.47	10	18	57.6

The categories (all of the following are for pressure games only): W-L-T = the team's record in games in which the quarterback played; Comp. = completions per game; Atts. = pass attempts per game; Pct. = completion percentage; Yds. = passing yards per game; Avg. gain = average gain per pass attempt; TDs = touchdown passes; Ints. = interceptions; Rating = NFL passer rating. (See nonpressure ratings box for further information.)



## NONPRESSURE/PRESSURE DIFFERENTIAL

Rank	Player	Nonpressure Rating	Pressure Rating	Diff.
1.	Steve DeBerg	82.5	94.1	+11.6
2.	Dave Krieg	79.3	90.9	+11.6
3.	Wade Wilson	76.6	80.9	+4.3
4.	Phil Simms	81.2	82.3	+1.1
5.	Bernie Kosar	82.9	83.8	+0.9
6.	Jay Schroeder	68.2	69.0	+0.8
7.	Joe Montana	95.0	94.9	-0.1
8.	Dan Marino	89.1	88.9	-0.2
9.	Bubby Brister	78.0	77.5	-0.5
10.	John Elway	74.5	71.3	-3.2
11.	Boomer Esiason	89.1	83.8	-5.3
12.	Warren Moon	89.1	82.9	-6.2
13.	Jim Kelly	90.9	78.6	-12.3
14.	Mike Tomczak	70.0	57.6	-12.4
15.	Jim McMahon	84.6	71.6	-13.0
16.	Jim Everett	88.8	75.2	-13.6
17.	Randall Cunningham	83.5	69.1	-14.4
18.	Ken O'Brien	88.5	73.1	-15.4
19.	Bobby Hebert	84.6	65.5	-19.1
20.	Mark Rypien	90.4	69.8	20.6

See nonpressure ratings box for information on how ratings were compiled.

congruity in the passer rating formula. Rypien's finest statistical moments occur in the comfort of nonpressure games. He has thrown 46 touchdown passes in those 23 games and only 20 interceptions. His record in those games? A very average 12-11. By contrast, in 12 pressure games Rypien has 13 touchdown passes and 19 interceptions but sports a record of 8-4. What gives? The

.497, but he's .509 in pressure games. Says one scout: "With him, it's all or nothing."

**Jim McMahon, Eagles.** For 10 seasons McMahon, now in Philadelphia, has done whatever it takes to win. It has cost him dearly in terms of bodily harm, but you can't argue with a pressure won-lost record of 10-4, second among active quarterbacks. McMahon, however, was blessed with a ter-

tions in last year's brutal playoff loss to Buffalo, but don't sell Schroeder short. Granted, his passer rating isn't in the lofty neighborhood of Krieg's, but the differential is worth examining. Schroeder is one of a handful of quarterbacks whose rating goes up in pressure games, from 68.2 to 69.0. Moreover, his won-lost record in tough games is a surprising 16-8.

Schroeder, once a baseball prospect, has always gone for the long ball. His completion percentage in nonpressure games is a woeful

to keep the bench warm for another team, in this case Green Bay. Like McMahon, Tomczak has a fairly drastic dip in passer rating —70.0 to 57.6—in pressure games, but his 11-8 pressure record, including 2-1 in the playoffs, is respectable.

## THE UGLY

**Randall Cunningham, Eagles.** Sometimes a team can put too much pressure on a quarterback. By all accounts, Cunningham is one of the finest athletes in the NFL, though a knee injury in Week 1 knocked him out for the 1991 season. Still, Cunningham's performance in Philly's pressure games has been spotty. He's 9-6 overall, but his rating differential fell off a notable minus-14.4. In nonpressure games Cunningham threw 59 touchdown passes and 31 interceptions; in pressure games the figures are 16 and 18. His record in the playoffs: 0-3. Someone should apologize to Buddy Ryan.

"Sometimes," says Young, "it's the team more than the quarterback. Sometimes you can put too much on the shoulders of one man. You don't want it to be a situation of where you win if he plays well and lose if he doesn't."

**Jim Everett, Rams.** Heading into the 1991 season Everett had compiled the NFL's 10th all-time passer rating—82.2—but his 88.8 nonpressure figure was balanced by a 75.2 figure in pressure games and a 10-7 record. Like Cunningham, Everett beats up on weaker opponents, throwing 46 touchdown passes and 28 interceptions in nonpressure games, but the pressure numbers are 29 and 26.

"We keep waiting and waiting," says one personnel man, "and he never seems to get over the hump."

**Ken O'Brien, Jets.** For eight years now the Jets quarterback has built a reputation of consistency and efficiency. True, his overall passer rating is a fine 82.2, but look a bit further. O'Brien is 34-23-1 in nonpressure games and owns a passer rating of 88.5. In 14 pressure games, however, the record is a grim 3-11 and the rating drops to 73.1, a differential of minus-15.4.

**Bobby Hebert, Saints.** Hebert's rating differential of minus-19.1 is the second worst among quarterbacks who qualified, and the Saints are 5-5 in the pressure games he has quarterbacked, which pales in comparison to his 21-11 nonpressure mark. In those 10 pressure games Hebert has nine touchdowns and 10 interceptions; the nonpressure numbers are 42 and 21 in 32 games.

As GREG GARBNER's deadline approaches, his typing speed goes from 40 words per minute to 120. Greg contributed to the football ratings section in our September issue.



In pressure situations, Hebert's hardly been a ragin' Cajun.

expertise of coach Joe Gibbs, who is 12-4 in playoff games, probably explains this discrepancy.

**Jay Schroeder, Raiders.** Yes, he looked downright terrible throwing five intercep-

tioned defense in Chicago, which masked his rating differential of minus-13.0 in big games.

**Mike Tomczak, Packers.** Here's another Bears quarterback who has moved on

# ARMS IN RESERVE

*As the 49ers' Steve Young found out, back-up quarterbacks must stay mentally and physically sharp because sudden injuries, impatience, or ineptitude mean they could be the starter at any time*

By BOB GLAUBER

THE STORYLINE FOR THE showdown at Giants Stadium on December 15, 1990, was perfect: the Buffalo Bills vs. the New York Giants, a preview to a possible Super Bowl XXV matchup six weeks later in Tampa. Who could quibble with those who had relished the possibilities as the teams took the field on a cold, rainy afternoon at the Meadowlands? These were, after all, two of the likely contenders for the title. On one side, Buffalo's Jim Kelly stood at the controls of the seemingly unstoppable no-huddle offense; on the other, the Giants were led by Phil Simms, who was in the midst of his most brilliant statistical season since entering the National Football League in 1979. This game was to give us the best indication of whether an American Football Conference team actually was capable of winning the AFC's first Super Bowl since 1984.

It all fit together perfectly—until about 3 p.m., by which time horrified fans from both sides were wondering whether either team would win another game, much less reach the Super Bowl. First Kelly went down, the victim of a sprained left knee that looked so bad some doubted he would return until the following season. Then it was Simms, whose right foot snapped under the weight of hard-charging defensive end Leon Seals.

With a steady rain pouring down, and with back-ups Jeff Hostetler and Frank Reich under center for the Giants and Bills, respectively, time seemed to simply stop for a while. The dream Super Bowl matchup now seemed like a cruel joke, one more disillusionment for fans from both teams.

Hostetler and Reich to the Super Bowl? Surely you jest. One glaring piece of NFL history told you neither team would be capable of winning the championship. That simple fact, etched into stone by more than two decades of reality, was that no pure back-up in league history ever had won the Super Bowl. Yes, Earl Morrall had come off the bench to replace the injured Johnny Unitas and give the Baltimore Colts a 16-13 victory over the Dallas Cowboys in Super Bowl V, but Morrall had been a starter with the Lions and the Giants before joining the Colts in 1968.

Naturally, neither Hostetler nor Reich could have been expected to win a championship. Reich wouldn't get the chance to alter the course of history. Kelly was back in time for the Bills' first playoff game—but not before Reich helped secure the AFC East title by mopping up in a 17-13 victory over the Giants and beating the Dolphins 24-14 the following week to clinch the division. Hostetler, of course, did get the

chance, and he came through. He beat the Bills 20-19 at Tampa Stadium in the most thrilling Super Bowl of all time—and in the process changed both our sense of history and our perception of back-up quarterbacks.

To think that either team even would have been in Tampa was tantamount to NFL sacrilege. Lose your starter and kiss your season goodbye—that's how it's supposed to go. Or is it? Can we now expect to see more performances like Hostetler's historic run in future years? Can teams that spend a fortune on their starters finally take heart in the possibility that they can still win when their less expensive, almost forgotten fill-ins have to race to the rescue?

Well, yes. Sort of.

We now know that it's possible, but duplicating Hostetler's accomplishment will take some doing. We're not talking a sure-fire blueprint for success here—if that were the case, then what's the sense of investing millions in a starter?—but at the very least, there are encouraging signs that teams no longer live and die on the merits of how far their starting quarterback can take them.

"I think the situation has changed dramatically," says Pat Haden, the former Rams quarterback who does NFL commentary for TNT. "The situation with the Giants was a clear example of having a capable guy who could take over. It obviously paid off that the Giants had Hostetler."

"Quarterbacks have always gotten hurt a lot over the years, but now there's more emphasis on the position. Years ago people weren't throwing the ball as much, so the second-team quarterback would just come in and hand the ball off. Now, with teams passing so much, that second team guy has to be a special kind of guy who can be ready and ready quickly."

Hostetler certainly fit the mold of the ever-ready back-up. At the very least, he opened people's minds to the possibility that back-ups are more than sideline secretaries and practice-team throwers. In fact, Hostetler's playoff performance so impressed the Giants' rookie coach, Ray Handley, that Handley named him the starter over Simms after a spirited 1991 preseason battle.

Joe Theismann knows something about what Hostetler went through before his Super Bowl experience, even though the former Redskins passer had little experience as a reliever. Theismann, who led Washington to a Super Bowl championship after the 1982 season and a Super Bowl appearance the following year, believes the odds are stacked heavily against a back-up succeeding instantly when a starter's injury or ineffectiveness thrusts him onto the battlefield.

"It's the toughest job in football, or in pro sports," says Theismann, an ESPN com-



**NFL**  
**PLAYOFF**  
**PREVIEW**





**The Pack turned Randall's knee and Philly's season inside-out.**



mentator. "It's unlike any job in any other pro sport. In hockey you can skate your second and third lines; in basketball almost everybody on the bench plays; in baseball a pitcher pitches every four or five days. But in football the back-up quarterback basically gets all his work in training camp. He works from late July to late August and is then relegated to two or three snaps in a season.

"In football you're cast into the back-up role, and you sit in meetings and take snaps as the opposing quarterback in practice, and now, all of a sudden—say, eight games into the season—you're asked to go out and play. How hard is that? That's *hard*."

Yet, the once-rare sight of a back-up quarterback stepping into the starting lineup is becoming much more commonplace in the NFL. Look at the start of the 1991 regular season as an example:

- Steve Young, who for years has been known as the NFL's super sub, was thrust into the 49ers' starting job after the legendary Joe Montana went down in the preseason with an elbow injury. Montana spent the first half of the season on injured reserve.

- Eagles quarterback Randall Cunningham, who had started every game from 1987 to '90, suffered a season-ending knee injury in Week 1. That left the Eagles with Jim

McMahon, who has never played an entire season because of his never-ending injuries.

- Timm Rosenbach of the Cardinals, one of only two quarterbacks to take every snap in 1990, was lost for the 1991 season after undergoing knee surgery during the preseason. Tom Tupa became the starter.

- The other quarterback to take every snap in '90 was Seattle's David Krieg. He fared only a little better than Rosenbach; Krieg suffered a broken thumb in the Seahawks' opener and was scheduled to miss two months.

"Back-up quarterbacks—that's the story of the year," says Haden, and he's right. The underlying reasons for the story are almost as varied as the circumstances leading to all the changes. The three major factors are injuries, impatience, and ineptitude.

**The injury factor.** In recent years injuries have taken their toll on dozens of starting quarterbacks. Simms, Kelly, Bernie Kosar of the Browns, Mark Rypien of the Redskins, Warren Moon of the Oilers, and Don Majkowski of the Packers—just to name a few—have missed time because of assorted breaks and bruises. That rate of attrition conceivably could climb higher in future years, thanks to the liberalized in-the-grasp rules adopted before the '91 season. Prior to the rule change, referees were instructed to stop a play as soon as a defender had a quarterback in the grasp and under control. However, teams often complained that quarterbacks never had a chance to wriggle free from their would be tacklers. Under the new interpretation, the officials have much more latitude when deciding whether the quarterback can get out of the tackler's grasp without his forward motion being stopped. Now passers may get an extra second to fire one off, but defenders also have time for a second or third shot. Former 49ers coach Bill Walsh thinks that may be asking for trouble.

"It had gotten a little bit ridiculous with the quick whistles, but it's a concern," Walsh says. "I'm even more concerned with the times the quarterback doesn't have the ball and gets hit. I'm very concerned about that." So is Redskins general manager Charley Casserly, who lobbied vigorously

against the new rule. "We don't like it," he says. "We voted against it. It leaves quarterbacks too vulnerable to being hit."

However, Jerry Seeman, the league's director of officiating, says the spirit of the rule is not designed to augment the injury risk. "It's designed to allow quarterbacks to be able to continue the play as long as he's not in grasp and control," he says. "I'm very comfortable with it. As soon as grasp and control are established, the whistle is blown. I don't see an increase in injuries because of that change."

**The quick hook factor.** With coaches feeling more pressure from fans after a series of dismal performances by the starting QB, the temptation to use the back-up as a spark has become greater. For example, Joe Gibbs, the highly successful coach of the Redskins, played musical quarterbacks with Jay Schroeder and Doug Williams during the 1987 season. Gibbs' final decision to go with Williams in the playoffs ultimately won him a Super Bowl.

Gibbs has also gone with the hot quarterbacks on several occasions since his last Super Bowl victory—a development that has startled Theismann at times. "If you have a three- or four-game slump, you're out of there," Theismann says. "Joe has had to make changes at quarterback that I wouldn't have put up with. He'd have had one irate quarterback on his hands."

Look at the 1991 Patriots for further evi-



**Two's a crowd: 'When you have more than one quarterback you've got trouble,' says Simms.**



## IT'S TIME TO SHAKE OFF THE COBWEBS AND BE A HERO

**I**N A LEAGUE WHERE A FREE SAFETY might check in at 6'3" and 235 pounds, every NFL team knows its back-up quarterback is just a successful blitz away from the field. Here's where each team stands in the event of disaster (quarterbacks listed are each team's back-up at the start of the '91 season):

### YOU'RE IN GOOD HANDS

1. **Phil Simms, Giants.** A back-up with a Super Bowl victory under his belt? Now that's a luxury for rookie coach Ray Handley. So what if Simms is 36? He still has a few good years left.
2. **Steve Young, 49ers.** The super sub finally got an extended chance to play when Joe Montana went down with an elbow injury during the preseason. While he's no Montana, Young may be the best back-up ever to play—or if not the best, certainly the highest paid. Last year Young signed a two-year, \$4 million contract.
3. **Steve Walsh, Saints.** Walsh guided the Saints to the playoffs in 1990 but lost his starting job to Bobby Hebert, who returned in '91 after missing the previous season in a contract dispute.
4. **Frank Reich, Bills.** Reich helped the Bills stay alive in their 1990 quest for a Super Bowl by subbing for the injured Jim Kelly late in the season. He'll never supplant a healthy Kelly, but the Bills enjoy a rare sense of security with Reich as the back-up.
5. **Tom Tupa, Cardinals.** Hardly anyone had heard of this guy before Timm Rosenbach went down with a season-ending knee injury last summer, but Tupa helped the Cardinals get off to a quick 1991 start in the ultracompetitive NFC East.
6. **Chris Chandler, Buccaneers.** It's bad enough that the fans and media have turned nasty toward Vinny Testaverde in Tampa, but how bad is it when Vinny's back-up blasts him in the press?
7. **Steve Beuerlein, Cowboys.** Dallas missed a chance to get to the playoffs when Babe Laufenberg replaced Troy Aikman near the end of the 1990 season. Determined not to be caught short again, the Cowboys went out and made a preseason deal to get Beuerlein from the Raiders.

### HOLD THOSE SUPER BOWL RESERVATIONS

8. **Stan Humphries, Redskins.** Joe Gibbs keeps hoping Humphries will make a run at the No. 1 job, but don't hold your breath waiting for Stan to challenge Mark Rypien.
9. **Rich Gannon, Vikings.** Gannon started in place of the injured Wade Wilson in 1990, but the Vikings failed to make the playoffs. Wilson opened '91 as the starter, but Gannon got a shot at the No. 1 job around midseason.



The Saints marched into the playoffs behind Walsh last season.

10. **Jim McMahon, Eagles.** McMahon, who wasn't exactly setting the league on fire, followed Randall Cunningham's lead and suffered a knee injury of his own in Week 5.
11. **Billy Joe Tolliver, Falcons.** Chargers general manager Bobby Beathard wanted John Friesz as his starter, so he sent Tolliver packing to the Falcons to back up Chris Miller.
12. **Kelly Stouffer, Seahawks.** Now a three-year veteran, Stouffer had the unenviable task of guiding the Seahawks after Dave Krieg went down in Week 1 with a broken thumb and Jeff Kemp proved to be ineffective during the next several weeks.
13. **Cody Carlson, Oilers.** There's no replacing Warren Moon, the master of the run-and-shoot, but Carlson has shown the ability to step in during Moon's frequent bouts with injury. The problem is, Carlson can't win consistently.
14. **Todd Marinovich, Raiders.** Jay Schroeder must be looking over his shoulder. The No. 1 draft pick out of USC could become one of the league's best starters, but it's going to take some time.

### ATTENTION, ALL STARTERS: PLEASE STAY HEALTHY

15. **Gary Kubiak, Broncos.** Who knows how good Kubiak is? After all, John Elway has missed only two starts since 1983. However, Dan Reeves has thought enough of Kubiak to keep him around for the last nine years.
16. **Jack Trudeau, Colts.** When this guy is hot he's nearly unbeatable. Of course, he's never stayed hot when he has been given extended playing time in past seasons.
17. **Hugh Millen, Patriots.** When Tom Hodson faltered early, Millen got the nod.
18. **Bob Gagliano, Chargers.** At least now Gagliano doesn't have to worry about getting hammered nearly every play like he once did in the Lions' run-and-duck offense.
19. **Blair Kiel, Packers.** When Don Majkowski was sidelined in Week 5, coach Lindy Infante

gave the ball to Kiel, a journeyman whom Infante had been flip-flopping on the depth chart with Mike Tomczak, a Plan B signee from the Bears. But neither Kiel nor Tomczak is capable of the kind of Majk the Pack needs.

20. **Andre Ware, Lions.** The Lions thought Ware was ready to replace Rodney Peete as the starter in '91, but the Heisman Trophy winner started the season as a third-stringer behind Peete and a free agent named Erik Kramer.

21. **Mike Pagel, Rams.** Pagel has plenty of experience warming the bench. He spent five seasons backing up Bernie Kosar before hooking on in 1991 with the Rams.

22. **Neil O'Donnell, Steelers.** The Steelers picked him in the third round out of Maryland in 1990, but he won't come close to the accomplishments of Esiason, the most celebrated Maryland thrower.

### BETTER WAIT TILL NEXT YEAR

23. **Mark Vlasic, Chiefs.** His teammates call him "Pickle" because of his last name. Unfortunately for Vlasic, that will stand as his NFL claim to fame.
24. **Scott Secules, Dolphins.** Now that Dan Marino has signed a \$23 million contract extension, Secules can just sit back, enjoy the view from the sidelines, and keep his uniform clean.
25. **Peter Tom Willis, Bears.** At least Willis doesn't have Mike Ditka chewing his ear off—unless, of course, starter Jim Harbaugh is out with an injury.
26. **Troy Taylor, Jets.** The Jets said in 1990 that Taylor was their quarterback of the future. Then why did they draft Louisville quarterback Browning Nagle in 1991?
27. **Erik Wilhelm, Bengals.** Wilhelm has blond hair, but that's all he has in common with Bengals starter Boomer Esiason.
28. **Todd Philcox, Browns.** The best thing you can say about Philcox? He's 6'4". That's about where it ends. □ —B.G.

dence. Coming out of the preseason, rookie coach Dick MacPherson named Tommy Hodson his starter over Hugh Millen but that was only for the first game. MacPherson reserved the right to reverse field down the road. And he did.

**The watered-down talent factor.** With a relative dearth of truly dominant quarterbacks, many teams have situations where the difference in talent between two or more of their QBs is barely distinguishable. "I think you can make a good argument that after the top four or five quarterbacks in the league, the rest of the guys are basically back-up quarterbacks," Haden says.

"You look at the 28 teams, and I bet you 14 of them have a quarterback situation that had to be resolved in training camp. The Giants' situation highlights it, but look at teams such as New Orleans, New England, San Diego, and Seattle. There were some tough questions to be answered. The difference on those teams between the No. 1 and No. 2 quarterbacks is not that great. Quite frankly, I don't think there are as many good quarterbacks in the league as there used to be."

Walsh agrees. He traces the reason to a lack of college programs that stress the passing game. "The problem is that colleges are not producing that many pro-type quarterbacks," he says. "They've gone more to

the running quarterback. The [collegiate] passing game has very little skill to it." The pattern probably won't change anytime soon, either. With only a handful of college teams building their programs around the pass—presently Houston, Brigham Young, and Miami lead the way—the chances of producing more blue-chip passers appear to diminish every year.

That's why an even greater premium has been placed on having more than one quality passer on your roster. "The second quarterback has really become an important phase of your game," says Ken Herock, the Falcons vice president of player personnel. "You can see [starting quarterbacks] all going down with injuries. If the back-up isn't good enough, you're just going to hope to stay in the game and survive." Herock backed up his words the week before his 1991 regular-season opener. The Falcons traded for Billy Joe Tolliver, the Chargers' second-round draft choice in 1989, who had lost his starting job to John Friesz, a sixth-round pick out of Idaho in 1990.

The increased attention focused on quarterback depth is in stark contrast to the attitude of an earlier generation, when the second-stringer didn't seem to mean as much. "I know when I was with the Raiders, Kenny Stabler went down [with an injury in the mid-'70s], and we had this nice prospect," says Herock. "Our back-up was David Humm

[a former Nebraska quarterback]. Humm was a nice prospect . . . until he had to play."

The new focus on hoarding quarterback talent does have a flipside, however. While it may appear to be a necessity to coaches and front-office personnel to have more than one capable passer, the quarterbacks themselves don't necessarily see it that way. In fact, sometimes two quarterbacks is one too many.

Simms' answer on the subject is quite clear: He believes a team must have one established starter. Constant competition at the position can only mean problems. "It's not a healthy situation," he says. "Coaches, announcers, fans can say whatever they want, but when you have more than one quarterback you've got trouble. It's not a good situation for either the quarterback or the team. I don't mean for it to sound bad, but I'm just stating a fact."

Simms didn't have to wait long for his theory to be borne out. He couldn't even get through his first 1991 preseason game without encountering the problems associated with a quarterback controversy. In his first game since being injured—fittingly, it was against the Bills at Giants Stadium—Simms threw a fourth-quarter pass away in the endzone when no one was open. It was the proper thing to do on third-and-goal from the 9, but the fans wanted a touchdown and they vented their frustration. They booed Simms so hard that the beleaguered quarterback stalked back to the sidelines and screamed: "\_\_\_\_\_ the fans! \_\_\_\_\_ the fans! I don't want to be here!"

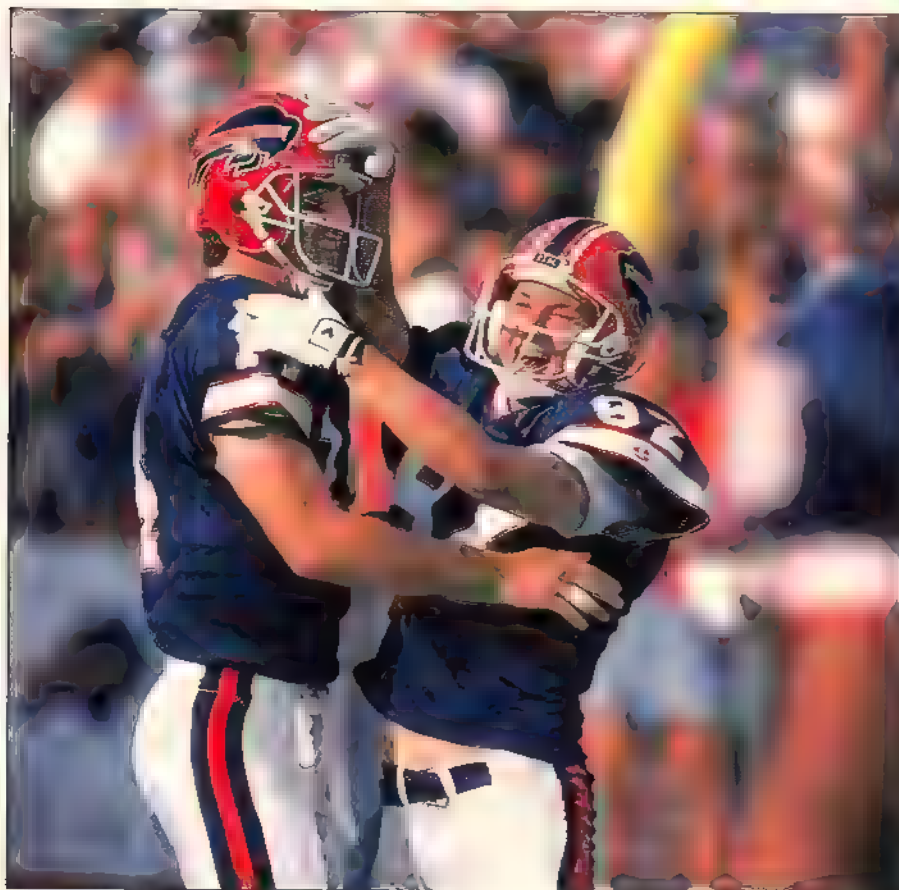
"I'll never forget a story [former Giants coach] Bill Parcells once told me," says Simms. "Parcells was talking to another coach—I don't want to say which one—and he asked the coach, 'Have you got a quarterback?' And the coach gets all excited and says, 'I've got three of them that can throw.' And Parcells says, 'In other words, you don't have any.'"

Of course, life isn't all bad as a back-up, either. Simms will make \$1.4 million this year. The average back-up QB's salary this year is \$525,000, more than \$100,000 higher than the average NFL player's salary for '91.

Former Redskins quarterback Sonny Jurgensen can attest to the back up quarterback's easier lifestyle. He reflected upon how enjoyable the bench could be whenever he heard the abuse from the RFK Stadium crowd during his years as starter.

"I would always tell the quarterbacks behind me, 'Just sit quietly,'" Jurgensen says. "I'll make you a hero."

*Like any good quarterback, starter or back-up, BOB GLAUBER comes through in the clutch. Bob contributed to our "Sports Salaries" special issue in April.*



**Reich (left) kept Buffalo's game rolling when Kelly was rocked.**





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# SPECIAL EFFECTS



*The undeniable impact of special teams stars such as David Meggett, Sean Landeta, and Reyna Thompson of the Giants has led to overdue fame for the unsung heroes of the 'suicide squad'*

By SHELDON SUNNESS



## NFL PLAYOFF PREVIEW



**T**HERE WAS A TIME when the idea of playing on special teams seemed as glamorous as, say, exile to Siberia or a life sentence in the state pen. The six units (punting, placekicking, and kicking off, both attacking and defending) were known as "suicide

squads" or "kamikaze teams"—and for good reason: The collisions that result when oversized men sprinting with a full head of steam hurl themselves at opponents doing the same thing look more like crack-ups at the Daytona 500 rather than football plays. The carnage is reflected in the injury rates, which have been calculated at six to eight times the normal rate.

Special teams membership brought no fortune—players earned a fraction of the salaries of their offensive and defensive counterparts—and even less fame. The typical special teams player once was described as "bench-pressing four times his IQ." In an appropriate sign of anonymity, the National Football League's first special teams captain, the Baltimore Colts' Alex Hawkins, was nicknamed "Captain Who?"

It's no surprise that special teams were made up of fuzz-faced rookies scratching to make the club, aging vets struggling to stay in the game, the crazies who loved to hit (often more a media creation than a reality), and the catchers-on, the hangers-on, and the too-far-gone. Little wonder that playing on special teams routinely has been viewed as a punishment, according to CBS announcer and former Oakland Raiders coach John Madden, where "80% of the guys think they don't belong." Even the Pro Bowl originally named special teams players to the squad in large part because none of the regulars wanted to perform the duty.

Of course, those in the know knew better. They realized George Allen wasn't just blowing smoke when he declared that football "is one-third offense, one-third defense, and one-third kicking." They understood the value of special teams. How crucial are these suicide squads? Very crucial indeed. "Special teams can win you from two to six games a year," says Madden. "They can mean the difference between making the playoffs and not."

In recent years, thanks largely to TV's instant replays and isolation shots, the average fan is getting the message, too. Those who watched the New York Giants' march

to the Super Bowl championship last season could focus more than ever before on the roles played by Sean Landeta's booming, perfectly placed punts and

David Meggett's electrifying returns, Matt Bahr's pressure-packed placekicks, and, maybe most telling of all, Reyna Thompson's crunching open-field tackles.

**I**F ANY PLAYER REFLECTS THE growing appreciation fans have for the work of special teams players, it's Thompson. Reyna (pronounced "Ren-NAY") is the end—or "hawk" or "gunner" or "hot man"—whose job on punt coverage involves nothing less than beating the blocks at the line of scrimmage, rushing downfield as the ball is punted, shredding another set of blockers, and nailing the punt returner—often in his tracks.

He does that job very well. A Plan B acquisition from the Miami Dolphins in 1989, Thompson has had more great hits than Michael Jackson and Mike Tyson combined and accounted for 20 coverage tackles (17 solo) last year, after 21 the previous season, on the way to Pro Bowl recognition. "He's the best we've ever had here," said Giants coach Bill Parcells last season. Madden goes even further, calling him "the best ever to play the position."

If Thompson symbolizes a new breed, though, his introduction to special teams was entirely typical. He used them as a way to get on the field.

Following a standout high school career in football and track, including All-America honors as a hurdler, Thompson enrolled at Baylor and concentrated on track. He returned to football as a sophomore, making the team but getting little PT. "I was hustling all over the field," he recalls, "but I was like 19th string."

So Thompson volunteered for the suicide squad and joined the "bullet," wedge busters who routinely sacrificed their bodies in order to bring down the ball carrier. However, Thompson had a better idea. "I zeroed in on the man who turned his head [on the wedge]." That allowed Thompson to keep his head and also make the play.

As a rookie with the Dolphins, it was more of the same. He saw limited playing time through the early exhibitions, but he moved up the depth charts until he found his way onto the field and, despite the more sophisticated pro return game, began making the plays.

Why is Thompson so good? He has a special blend of speed, strength, and agility that enables him to beat the blocks, run downfield, and make the open-field tackle. "Many guys can do one; some can do a couple," says Madden. "Reyna Thompson does all three

very well." Parcells, now a football analyst for NBC, confirms that analysis: "He's tough, he's smart, he's fast, and he studies."

By now studying should come easily to Thompson. After graduating from Baylor with a B.A. in communications and a B.S. in education, he's currently wrapping up a master's in English literature from Florida International University and has hopes of teaching on the college level. Given that background, it should be no surprise that Thompson prepares for opponents by watching more films than Siskel and Ebert.

By day with his teammates—in special teams film sessions that have become known as "The Reyna Thompson Hour"—Thompson will concentrate on the big picture, picking out the general flow and key tendencies of upcoming opponents. Alone with the projector in the evening, he can focus on details such as the strengths and weaknesses of the individuals he will face on Sunday. "I don't always go at their weaknesses," he says, "but I always avoid [challenging] their strengths."

Two hours a night with game film is not uncommon for Thompson. In fact, it's almost required these days. As a result of his success he's become a marked man, double—and often triple-teamed. The blocking schemes he faces, designed to knock him off the blocks or keep him from reaching the return man, can be varied and deceptive. Some teams will double him immediately at the line; others prefer to "shadow" him with a player many yards downfield; still others choose to bring a third player from the opposite side deep downfield to keep him from coming inside. They're tricky but hardly insurmountable. Like the Boy Scouts, Thompson is always prepared.

Thompson recognizes preparation as a key ingredient in his success. Small wonder that when asked to identify his toughest opponents he replies, "The team I'm getting ready to face." Madden adds: "He prepares better for them than they do for him." Some of that may have to do with his attitude toward special teams. "It's as important as offense and defense," says Thompson, who also plays cornerback, where he has started on occasion, when the first-stringers have been injured.

Giants opponents are fully aware of what



**Busting the blocks: Thompson's strength, speed, and agility make him hard to stop.**

they face in Reyna Thompson. "If you don't get him, you don't get started," says Washington Redskins special teams coach Wayne Sevier. "You can't pound on him because you can't catch him."

Frank Gansz, who coaches the Detroit Lions special teams, agrees. Gansz knows a little bit about special teams; he's a minor legend because of his success with the Kansas City Chiefs in the early '80s, when his return teams turned blocking a punt into both an art and a science. Gansz respects Thompson tremendously. "You have to make sure to block him," Gansz says, "or he'll ruin your return game."

**T**HERE ARE PROBABLY harder ways to make a living than returning punts, but they don't come to mind very quickly. If the average returner got paid by the jolt he'd be as rich as Donald Trump in the good old days. An Oakland Raiders return man once said of his chosen profession, "It's like embalming."

Of course, the best way to play on special teams is to avoid getting hit. Take Meggett, for example. As a rookie in 1989 he led the league in punt returns, averaging 12.7 yards on the way to the Pro Bowl. Last season, with 10.8 yards per return, he just missed another berth. All the while he also was returning kickoffs and seeing more and more time in the Giants backfield.

"I'm a wild kind of runner," says the 5'7"





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- ☐ 7544 Dale Murphy
- ☐ 7546 Paul Molitor
- ☐ 7540 Gary Sheffield
- ☐ 7593 Ozzie Smith
- ☐ 7514 Tom Brunansky
- ☐ 7598 Vince Coleman
- ☐ 7574 Ryne Sandberg
- ☐ 7595 Andre Dawson
- ☐ 7508 Mark Grace
- ☐ 7504 Jerome Walton
- ☐ 7552 Kirk Gibson
- ☐ 7512 Orel Hershiser
- ☐ 7592 Will Clark
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- ☐ 7550 Kevin Elster

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- ☐ 7583 Roger Clemens
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dynamo—which is a bit like Picasso saying he's a wild kind of painter. Meggett's electrifying, creative bursts have given the Giants the sizzling breakaway threat they've missed for decades. Meggett has what's known as "functional speed," the kind that makes the first guy miss—and usually is worth 10 yards to any return. Naturally, that causes serious problems for defenders. "He threatens the home run on every play," says Sevier. "You can never take a play off when he's around the ball." How do you stop Meggett? "Kick the ball out of bounds," says Gansz, deadly serious, "or get lots of hang time."

Meggett has caused some concern for his teammates, as well: They're never quite sure just where or when he'll turn up on a return. "They stay on their blocks longer," says Meggett, something his special teams coach, Mike Sweatman, confirms: "We tell the troops to play the entire play."

**L**AST CHRISTMAS LANDETA got together with his special teams teammates and shared the wealth—specifically, \$7,000. That's how much he distributed in holiday gifts to blockers, snappers, et al., which brought to \$18,000 the total that the three-time All-Pro punter has dispensed over his last three full seasons. Landeta sports a career average of 43.4 yards per punt and has had just one blocked in his career. "It's my appreciation to them for taking the job as seriously as I do," he says of his largesse. It's also Landeta's acknowledgement that punting is much more than just leg extension.

Special teams, as Gansz sees it, brings together a total team effort. It blends the players of three units—the offense, the defense, and the special teams specialists—and it requires greater synchronization because the slightest breakdown can have the most disastrous consequences. The various parts must coordinate with the precision of a Swiss watch; everyone's role is significant. When Matt Bahr says, "On a placekick the kicker is the least important player on the field," he's overstating things a bit, but the point is clear: On any punt, the center snapper, the blocking linemen, and the Reyna Thompsons all earn their keep.

When Landeta punts, he doesn't simply kick. For example, he must decide how to kick: whether to air the ball out or to pooch it, whether to kick out of bounds or hang it high and comparatively short. Then he'll coordinate with Thompson on how Reyna will release from the line of scrimmage (inside or outside). For his part, Thompson is helped by his knowledge of Landeta's kicking: sighting the ball while rushing toward the returner, he knows that when the nose of the

ball turns end over end the punt will travel 10 to 15 yards further; when the nose of the ball is straight up it is ready to come down. "We do a lot of things that make people say we got lucky," Landeta says, "but it's not luck. It's by design."

Like Thompson, Landeta is devoted to studying the films. "I take it very seriously," he says. "You're not just a punter. You're part of a team." So he looks for the nuances: where the return team lines up, how it likes to rush, and how that varies from different spots on the field.

A punter may kick about half a dozen times per game, with the ball expected to travel 40 to 50 yards each time. That constitutes hidden yardage that goes largely unmeasured in the stats but can well be the difference in the game. "It's a game of field position," says Gansz, "and special teams can make all the difference." That was

Less obvious, however, is what happened near the end of the first half. Leading 12-3, the Bills had the Giants on the ropes when two Landeta punts, each netting more than 50 yards, kept Buffalo at the far end of the field and allowed New York to stay close, then climb back in.

As Landeta is quick to point out, nearly one of every four plays is a special teams play. When you add up all the yardage on kick exchanges and consider that about half the games are decided by seven points or less—and that the luckier scores about seven points a game—it all adds up.

This was all brought home to Landeta during his rookie season, in a conversation he had with Lynn Swann. "You have no idea what it was like to come in [after an excellent punt] and be buried at the 5-yard line," the former Steelers star told him. "We were half-defeated." Not only would the team have

## THE LOW MEN ON THE TOTEM POLE

**S**PECIAL TEAMS MAY BE AS IMPORTANT as the offense and defense, but they're certainly not viewed that way—even by teams in the NFL. "Special teams are still an afterthought," says CBS announcer John Madden. "Coaches say they spend as much time on special teams [as the other units], but they really don't." There are many reasons for this neglect.

First of all, special teams really aren't assembled until after clubs set their final rosters early in September. The resulting lack of cohesion is the major reason why so many games can be "stolen" on special teams play during the season's first month.

Also, the makeup of a given club has a great effect on special teams. For example, a team that uses a run-and-shoot offense tends to contribute smaller players to special teams. In addition, the increased use of varied offensive and defensive sets (i.e., four wideouts, nickel defense) means that teams are forced to protect more position players under Plan B. Players who are strictly special teams performers are more likely to be unprotected and sign elsewhere, which means less continuity.

The amount of time devoted to special teams in a given week will fluctuate depending

on the time allotted to offense and defense. A new game plan or an especially tough opponent that demands extra attention often means less time for special teams. And while the attitude of most players, who hope to "rise above" special teams, may be a sign of healthy ambition, it also can put a solid dent in building special teams pride.

However, the biggest obstacle to the development of special teams may be the built-in conflict of interest that exists between special teams and the other units. As Madden says: "Every player has a [position] coach. Once that guy becomes a starter, that coach doesn't want him playing special teams."

While special teams don't get all the TLC they deserve, though, there are some positive signs in the immediate future. Greater depth in the league means there are better (if not always the best) athletes on special teams. And players are being drafted for their special teams ability. Also, more head coaches allocate more time to their meetings and practices to special teams. In fact, there is a growing sense of special teams pride, not just among players but among special teams coaches, who barely a decade ago tended to view their work as a "throwaway" job. □ —S.S.

never more apparent than in Super Bowl XXV, when it was proved twice, one time obvious to every fan, the other much more obscure.

Near the end of the game Landeta and the Giants punted just inside the Bills 10-yard line. Battling both the Giants defense and the clock proved too much for Buffalo; an excellent drive left them with a difficult 46-yard field goal attempt. As every fan knows, Scott Norwood missed the kick as time ran out, and the Giants won the closest Super Bowl ever.

a much longer distance to cover but, bottled up in its end of the field, it could use less of its offense and was more susceptible to turnovers.

Swann's words hit Landeta like a safety blitz. "I thought to myself, 'Man, you can really do something to help your team.'"

He certainly has. ■

*SHELDON SUNNESS, a New York-based free-lancer, doesn't have to worry about making an impact. Sheldon contributed a piece on the Giants' "mascot" in our August issue.*



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# A STAMPEDE IN BUFFALO

*Ever since Marv Levy, the Bills' conservative coach, adopted the radical no-huddle offense, his team—powered by all-purpose running back Thurman Thomas—has been trampling the rest of the league at will* By SCOTT PITONIAK

**T**HE STYLE OF FOOTBALL used to match the city's image. There was nothing fancy about it.

The Buffalo Bills of yesteryear just slapped on their helmets and kept pounding away until the whistle blew, then picked themselves up and rammed some more. It was lunch-bucket football—Cookie Gilchrist, Wray Carlton, O.J. Simpson, and Jim Braxton—yes, a-beer-and-a-shot-and-a-first-down football, and Buffalonians loved it. When Lou Saban's Bills battered their way to consecutive American Football League titles in 1964 and '65 playing in a dreary old stadium accurately nicknamed "The Rockpile," civic pride reached a feverish pitch in western New York.

Ask Bills fans to recall the most memorable play from that pair of title victories over the San Diego Chargers and it sure won't be any flashy razzle-dazzle. Almost unanimously they'll talk about linebacker Mike Stratton's bone-breaking tackle of halfback Keith Lincoln in the '64 game that knocked the All-AFL runner out of the contest. A hard-nosed bunch of football players had given their hardy fans reason to shout. It was a perfect match between team and town.

Fast-forward to the '90s, to an offense that sparkles with Hollywood glitz. It's called the no-huddle, and it is high-scoring, fast-paced, and ostentatious. No more dive plays up the middle; the running game consists of traps and draws to the dangerous Thurman Thomas, the league's best all-around offensive weapon. The no-huddle is more Rodeo Drive than One Bills Drive.

Perhaps no game demonstrated the dev-

astating possibilities of the no-huddle more than last January's AFC Championship Game, when the Bills nuked the Los Angeles Raiders 51-3 in a game that wasn't nearly as close as the score might indicate. The silver and black turned into the black and blue. The no-huddle left Al Davis pleading *no mas*. "I don't think anyone can stop it," Raiders defensive end Howie Long said in the aftermath of the embarrassment.

The following week, of course, somebody did stop it. The New York Giants came up with the perfect solution: They kept the ball out of quarterback Jim Kelly's hands for almost 41 minutes. The Bills still managed 17 points and 371 yards, but the passing attack was adequate at best. Most of Buffalo's offense came on quick bursts by Thomas against the Giants' two-man front. "It was more a case that we stopped ourselves than them stopping us," says Kent Hull, Buffalo's Pro Bowl center. "We never got in rhythm. We missed blocks. We dropped passes. We committed some dumb penalties. We were out of synch all day."

The Bills offense is just as dangerous this year. Thomas is running wild, Kelly passed for 1,644 yards and 13 touchdowns in his first five games alone, and two receivers—Andre Reed and James Lofton, as well as Thomas—each have a shot at 1,000 yards receiving. The no-huddle is a steamroller, and the NFL is just

so much asphalt. Lock the doors and hide the kids—Buffalo's coming to town!

The Bills have gone high-tech, and few Bills fans are clamoring for a return to the plodding days of old. The no-huddle is the most talked about and feared offense in the National Football League (sorry, run-and-shoot). There are times when it appears as unstoppable as an avalanche. It's a game of fastbreak hoops in helmets and shoulder pads. Kelly is the Magic Johnson in this pedal-to-the-metal attack, spiraling rather than dribbling his way past retreating, oxygen-deficient defenders, dishing off to Thomas or hitting Reed or Lofton in the open field. This is a team Paul Westhead dreams about.

However, the coach of the Bills is not Bill Walsh, Joe Gibbs, Sam Wyche, or some other innovative mind dubbed "genius" by the media. It's the not-so-marvelous Marv Levy, who watched the Giants beat him in the Super Bowl with the same ball-control approach he's preached for more than 40 years. The same Marv Levy who dusted off the wing-T offense in Kansas City—not in the 1940s, but in the '80s—and whose entire career would seem to stand against the flash and dash that could take his team all the way.

**T**HE SEEDS FOR BUFFALO'S NO-huddle were planted during the 1989 season, when Kelly played extraordinarily well in come-from-behind victories against Miami and Houston and a bitter playoff loss to Cleveland in which he threw for more than 400 yards. Says Bills offensive coordinator Ted Marchbroda: "I figured since Jimmy did such a good job with it in a comeback mode, why not have him operate it in situations when we weren't behind?"

Before the start of the 1990 season, Marchbroda talked the idea over with Levy. The head coach gave him the green light,



and on the Bills' first possession of the season they no-huddled their way down the



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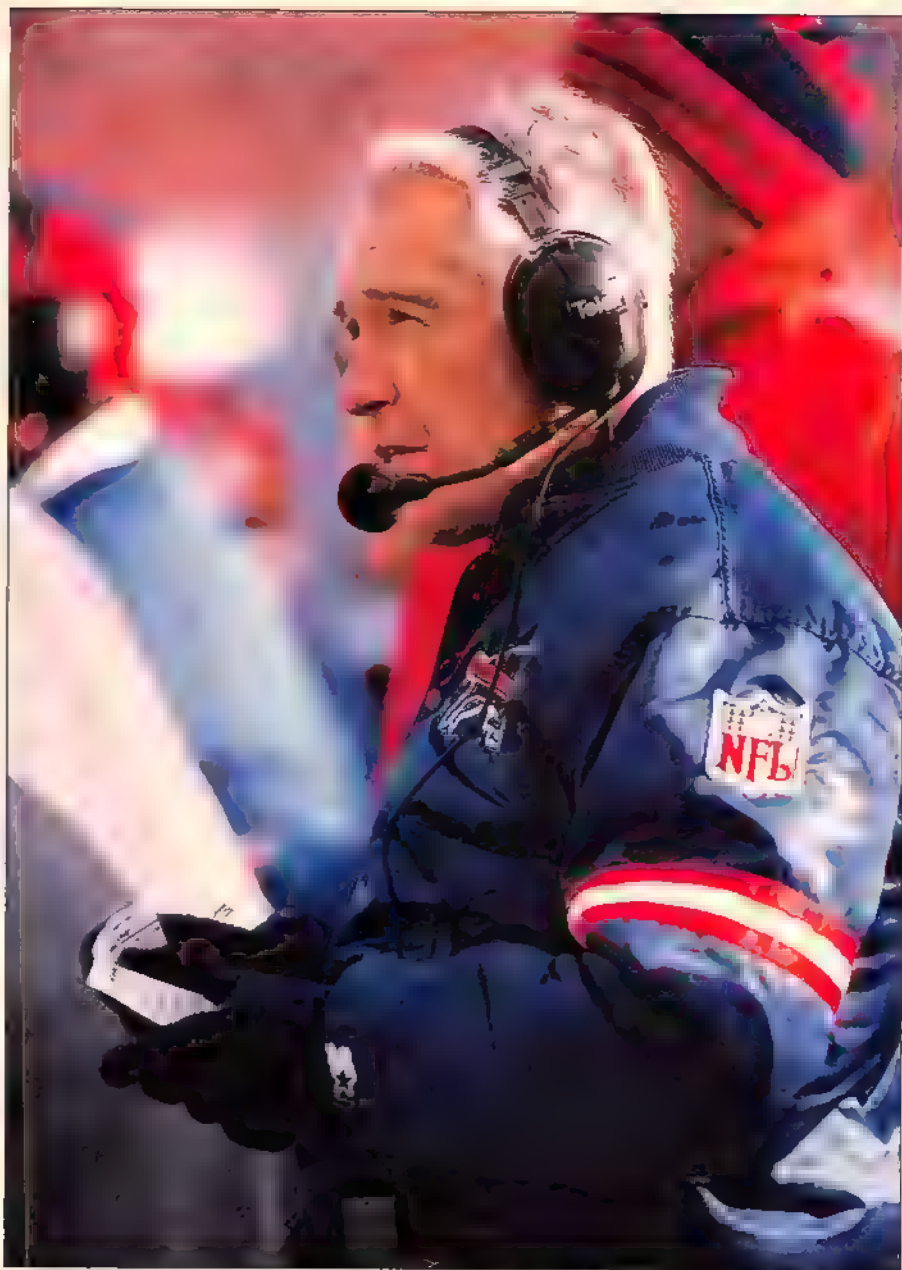


field for a field goal. Marchibroda used it sporadically during the Bills' next 10 games before shifting to it for good against Philadelphia on December 2. The score was 24-0 before the stunned Eagles were able to regroup. "After that game I said, 'We're on to something here,'" Marchibroda recalls. Counting the victory against the Eagles, Buffalo won 10 of its next 12 games (actually 10 of 11, if you toss out a meaningless game against Washington in which the Bills starters were used sparingly). During that stretch Buffalo averaged 30 points and more than 400 yards per contest, and the pace hasn't slowed since.

Not surprisingly, rave reviews have come pouring in. After a 52-34 trouncing of the Steelers, "Mean Joe" Greene, a member of the famed Steel Curtain now working as a defensive line coach for Pittsburgh, said his team was out of its league against the Bills. Jets defensive coordinator Pete Carroll, whose team did a good job in a 23-20 loss to Buffalo a week later, says: "They're about as close as you can get to being unstoppable. They have such good personnel. There are no weaknesses. You can't really stop them. You just try to slow them down." Former San Francisco coach Bill Walsh, a.k.a. "The



**The no-huddle has Reed and his fellow wideouts feeling no pain.**



**Levy says, 'Systems don't win games; players executing well do.'**

Genius," hints that the Bills might just be fielding the most explosive offense in NFL history. "I think you have to see them win a Super Bowl with it before you say it's the greatest," he says, "but there's no question it's the type of offense that grabs your attention."

While others have been swept away by no-huddlemania, however, Levy has tried to keep things in perspective. He repeats, ad nauseum, that "systems don't win games; players executing well do." "We haven't invented the Salk vaccine," he says. "It's just players playing together and getting better at it." There's some truth to that, too. As Kelly points out: "Not everyone can run this offense. You've got to have the right mix of players."

And just what is that mix? Well, you take two wideouts (Reed and Lofton) who can

catch the ball in traffic and are elusive enough to break the long one. You add a tight end with wideout speed (Keith McKeller) and a pick-your-poison back who is deadly whether he's running the ball or catching it (Thomas). You throw in a well-conditioned line that averages almost 300 pounds per man, a rugged quarterback who can make rapid fire decisions at the line of scrimmage, and an offensive coordinator not afraid to turn the offense over to his signal caller, and *voila!* You have the NFL's version of Loyola Marymount.

"All we've done is taken the two-minute offense that every team has in its playbook and stretched it out over 60 minutes," says Marchibroda. "There really isn't any magic to the strategy. The plays aren't any different. They're the same ones we call when we aren't in the no-huddle."



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In other words, the song's the same, it's just being played at 78 rpm instead of 45. The tempo is what makes it so exciting to watch and so difficult to defend against. "I think it tires out defenses, physically and mentally," Hull says. "It keeps them from digging in and pinning their ears back on the pass rush. We're the ones on our toes, dictating the tempo. That makes it a lot easier on us up front, especially when you're going up against those big old 300-pound defensive linemen."

The no-huddle unfolds so quickly that defensive situational substitutions are kept

to a minimum. That's usually to the Bills' advantage. "It's kind of like old-time football in that respect," Hull says. "We put our 11 out there, you put your 11 out there. Now, try and stop us."

It also resembles old-time football in that it puts the game back in the quarterback's hands. Marchibroda gives Kelly a detailed game plan, then stands back and watches. "We're out of the thing completely," he says. "The whole ball game is Jimmy's." That's fine with Kelly, who built his reputation operating the uptempo run-and-shoot offense of the Houston Gamblers of the United States Football League. So far he has thrived at the

throttle and last year became only the fifth quarterback in NFL history to reach triple figures in the passing efficiency ratings. "I love being the guy who has to get it done," he says.

Marchibroda has received much of the credit for masterminding the no-huddle in Buffalo, but Levy deserves applause, too. Even though it doesn't fit his conservative offensive tastes, the sometimes stubborn Levy was willing to adapt. "One of the great things about working for coach Levy is that he gives you that kind of freedom," Marchibroda says. "He hires people he has faith and trust in, and lets them do their thing as long as he's convinced what they're doing is sound." Adds defensive coordinator Walt Corey: "He takes the approach that he's the overseer, the chairman of the board. I've been with him 10 years if you include my years with him in Kansas City, and I don't recall him ever interfering. He's been a great boss to work for."

**A** PLAYBOOK IS MANDATORY during Buffalo Bills team meetings. A dictionary isn't, but maybe it should be. After all, you never know when Levy, the Phi Beta Kappa keyholder with the voluminous vocabulary, is going to drop some word bigger than offensive tackle Harold (House) Ballard on you. "There's a whole lot of head shaking going on when Marv uses one of those \$10 words you've never heard of," says Hull with a smile. "Heck, for all I know he could be making those words up."

Levy's also big on war analogies. To warn the Bills against overconfidence before a road game in which Buffalo was favored, he told his players about how Hitler and the German army were upset by the Soviets on the underdog's home field. To keep the Bills from looking past the opponent at hand last season, he implored them to "cross one river at a time, like Hannibal."

"To be honest, I don't know how many of these guys even know what World War II was," he says, laughing. "And some of them probably think Hannibal was an offensive tackle for the Jets."

You may have gathered by now that the man who leads the Bills is not your typical football coach. Oh sure, he can be paranoid and hot-headed, too—particularly on game day, when he is as demonstrative and profane as they come—but he also has a life outside football. He isn't consumed by what to call on third-and-one. Away from the stadium you're likely to find him with his nose stuck in a Dickens novel or a Churchill biography instead of a scouting report. "Professorial" is the adjective often used to describe Levy, and it fits. This erudite, gray-haired 63-year-old looks and sounds as if he



**Weather be damned: Thomas and Co. can blow you out in a blizzard.**





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**As the leader of the 60-minute drill, Kelly calls his own plays.**



would be more at home in front of a college history class than along the sidelines of the NFL.

"He's an intellectual," says Bills reserve offensive lineman Mitch Frerotte. "If I met the man on the street and didn't know who he was, I would never guess he was a head football coach."

That's what he is, though, and a pretty good one at that. When Levy replaced Hank Bullough midway through the 1986 season, the Bills were strictly counterfeit. They had dropped 37 of their previous 43 games, and there were more empty seats than warm bodies in Rich Stadium on Sunday after-

noons. Now you can't find a ticket to Bills home games, and Levy has been a major player in Buffalo's turnaround—in the standings and the stands.

Levy owns the highest winning percentage in franchise history, has captured three AFC East titles, and has gone to a Super Bowl. He would dearly love to return to the big game and atone for last season's heart-breaking loss to the Giants, and many believe he'll get his wish next month in Minneapolis. If he does, credit should be given to a man smart enough to realize that many things, including a certain offensive scheme, are not always what they appear to be.

Levy earned his conservative credentials at the knee of George Allen. After collegiate coaching jobs at Coe College, New Mexico, the University of California, and William & Mary and a year with the Philadelphia Eagles, Levy hooked up with Allen's Los Angeles Rams staff in 1970 and then followed the coaching legend to Washington. Under Allen, Levy learned the importance of preparation, consistency, and veteran leadership. He coached special teams for Allen, and his squads contributed greatly to the Redskins' Super Bowl VII victory in 1972.

The following year, with Allen's blessing, Levy headed north of the border, where he led the Montreal Alouettes of the Canadian Football League to two Grey Cup titles in five seasons. His success didn't go unnoticed; in 1977 he was hired to coach the Kansas City Chiefs. He inherited a 2-12 team in Kansas City, but he built steadily behind a power running attack and a stifling defense, and by 1981 had the Chiefs contending for the AFC West crown. However, when the bottom fell out during the strike season of '82, Levy was canned.

He caught on with the financially troubled Chicago Blitz of the USFL, but the team went 5-13 and folded after the season. After the Blitz ceased operations Levy filled the time with broadcast work with NBC and ESPN and with the University of California's radio team. He was just treading water until he could get back into coaching, though, and thanks to a guardian angel, the chance soon arrived. Bill Polian—who had worked as a scout for Levy in Montreal, Kansas City, and Chicago—was named director of player personnel for the Bills, and he hadn't forgotten his old friend. When Bullough started out 4-17, owner Ralph Wilson pulled the plug, and Levy was in. Despite some cries of cronyism, it seemed that a team with a hard-nosed tradition had hired the ideal coach.

As it turns out, Levy has been ideal—but not in the way you might expect. Instead of bending a talented nucleus to his vision of what football should be, Levy has displayed the flexibility to adapt to his personnel and to realize that one way to control the ball is to put it in the endzone. He's not about to scrap the no-huddle and revert to his former style for the sake of pride. "Our team doesn't lend itself to that style as much as it lends itself to the style we play," he says.

Besides, it's not like this offense is anemic. Last season power football triumphed, but this season might belong to the no-huddle. ■

*Rochester-based writer SCOTT PITONIAK covers the Bills and has enjoyed watching the team grow up with the city. This is Scott's first piece for INSIDE SPORTS.*



May you all find comfort  
during this holiday season.



# EIGHT IS ENOUGH

*The NBA is more popular than ever, but we'd like to respectfully suggest eight ways to make a good thing even better* By PAUL LADEWSKI

**T**HIS WINTER THERE'S LIKELY to be a fanny in every seat in every arena for virtually every National Basketball Association game. Ticket sales and TV revenues approached \$700 million a year ago—NBC-TV is as proud as a peacock about its ratings—and NBA merchandise is hotter than the Laker Girls. Talk about a house in order.

Things weren't always so good, though. In the late '70s the NBA was just a blip on the radar screen of sports. The league was short of superstars and hip-deep in problems—financial, imagewise, and otherwise. Its profile was still so low in 1980 that the Finals, which featured a 42-point performance by a certain rookie named Magic, were shown on tape delay.

However, that spectacular effort by Magic Johnson in the '80 Finals was a sign of things to come. The bicoastal rivalry of Magic and Larry Bird gave the NBA book-end selling points and a decade of nearly mythic battles. The arrival of Michael Jordan a few seasons later pushed fan identification through the roof. Oh, and one other thing: David Stern was named NBA commissioner in 1984.

Under Stern, the NBA negotiated a revolutionary revenue-sharing agreement with the players association in which the league agreed to use 53% of total revenues for player salaries. In return, the players agreed to a league-wide salary cap. Fueled by this spirit of cooperation and by the mushrooming popularity of its stars, the NBA rode a wave of incredible good fortune into the '90s.

Of course, nothing's so perfect that it can't be improved. In an attempt to make a good thing better, here are eight suggestions for improving the NBA:

- 1 Expand internationally—let's give the world a chance.**
- 2 Adopt instant replay: Take advantage of the technology.**
- 3 Reduce the number of timeouts in the last two minutes.**
- 4 Crack down on flagrant fouls before someone gets hurt.**
- 5 Revise the All-Star Weekend to de-emphasize the glitz.**
- 6 Shrink the regular season to a manageable size.**
- 7 Eliminate the first round of the playoffs.**
- 8 Name Elgin Baylor as official emcee of the annual draft.**



**1**Expand internationally. The NBA has said it has no plans to become an intercontinental league in the foreseeable future, but let's get real. If basketball is the wave of the future, the NBA will have to sail into uncharted waters. Can it afford not to? With a mere 15% of the planet's television viewers in the United States, there's a financial killing to be made overseas. In all likelihood, there are as many as 12 European cities that could and would support the league in a New York minute. To say basketball is big in Europe is to say Michael Jordan can play a little. Why, some kids in Barcelona even think Mike is behind the running of the bulls.

Sure, we can hear the critics now: *But there aren't enough good players to warrant expansion.* To which we say, that's baloney. Hey, if major league baseball and the National Football League can handle 28 teams apiece with their comparatively thin bases of talent, then basketball surely can handle even more with its worldwide farm system. To be sure, there are details yet to be ironed out, such as schedule, split rosters, and the effects on the salary cap, but if the league acts now it will be only a matter of years before the Rome Gladiators come to an NBA arena near us.



'Marv, the Gladiators make it a point to really stick every jump ball.'



'Smile for the camera, chump.'

**2**Adopt instant replay. The NBA has to do it—if for no other reason than the fans demand it. Virtually every poll conducted on the subject indicates that the public favors instant replay in the NFL in some form, and there's no reason to believe the NBA faithful feel any differently. Don't cringe. We don't need to review every possible three-second violation, but it wouldn't hurt to take another look at controversial calls that involve goaltending, for example, and the 24-second and game clocks. The NBA just has to be sure to find some replay officials who can make a decision before Junior goes to school the next morning.

Remember the opener of the playoff se-

ries between the Rockets and the Lakers last April? Replays showed that the Lakers' Byron Scott drained a shot after the 24-second clock had expired. The lead official, who was the only one of the three who had a good look at both the shot and the clock, correctly waved it off—and then, while the Lakers and their fans went screaming bonkers, allowed himself to be overruled by his sidekicks.

OK, so the reversal probably had no effect on the outcome of the game, but why wait for a similar boo-boo to help decide a championship? The truly wise league is the league that thinks ahead.

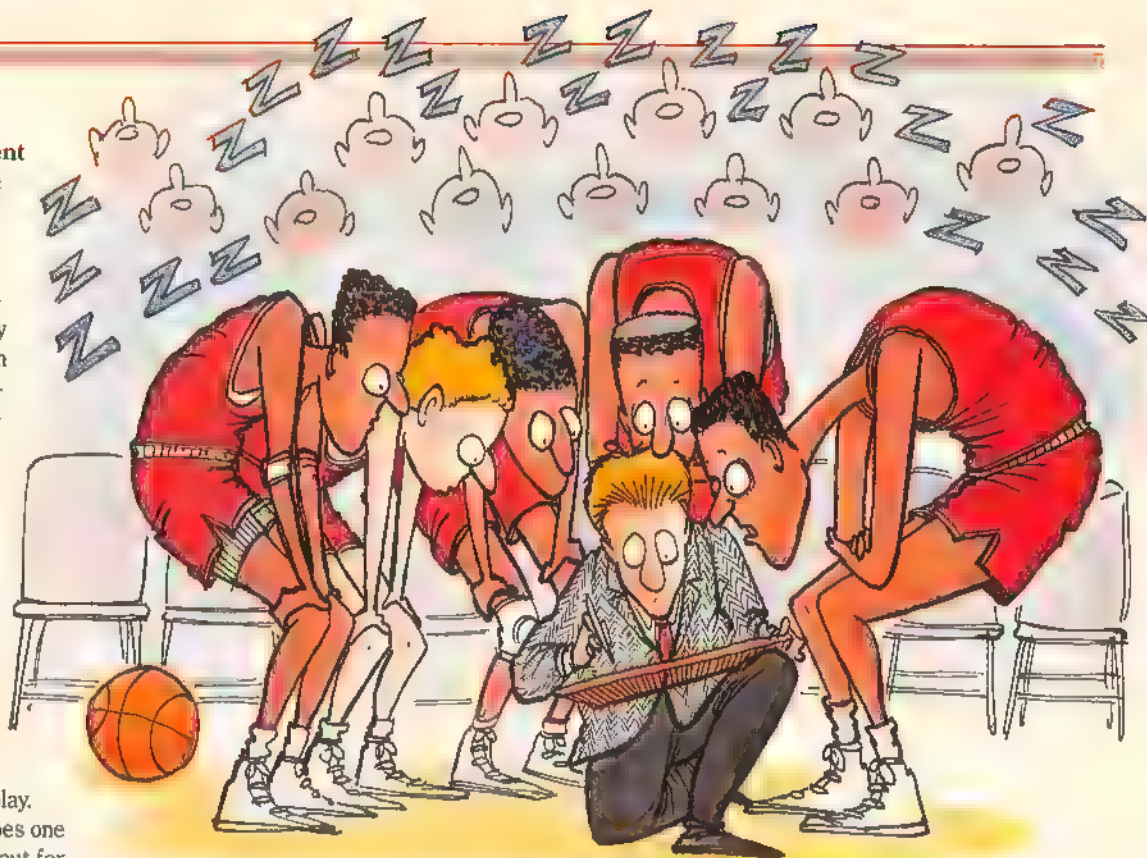
To ensure that every game doesn't last as long as the 30 Years' War...

**3 Reduce the allotment of timeouts.** Is there anything more maddening than a timeout in the waning seconds of a game that already has been decided? Do coaches really have an eight-point play in their playbooks? Currently each team is entitled to seven timeouts during regulation play and a maximum of three in the last two minutes—and that doesn't include one 20-second timeout per half. If both teams take their maximum number of timeouts, then 10 minutes and 40 seconds elapse in stoppages, compared to two minutes of actual play. C'mon, how much time does one need to say, "Run a clear-out for Charles"?

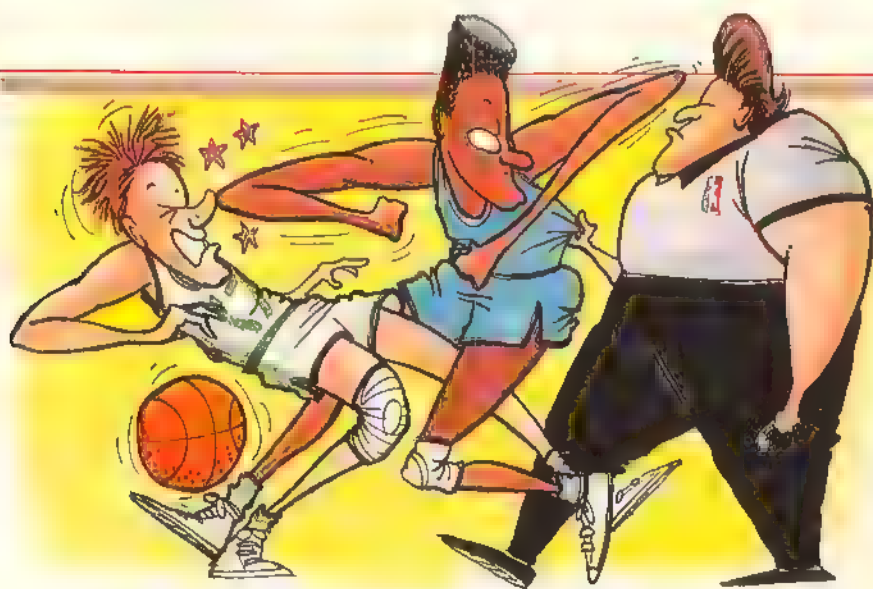
Limit each team to two timeouts of any kind in the last two minutes. Sponsors and concessionaires wouldn't be short-changed, fans wouldn't get antsy, players would have to think more on their

feet, and coaches still would have ample opportunity to pretend they know something the rest of us don't. Oh, and while the rules committee is still in session, it also

can award three free throws for fouls on three-point field goal attempts and reduce the maximum number of steps to, say, three per dribble.



'As you can see in Diagram 4b, then, the proper solution is to get fouled.'



'You with the elbows. I want to talk to you. In the parking lot. Now.'

zero in on seven figures, tax-deductible fines have proved to be of little deterrent to head hunting. Would you prefer that \$2,500 in cash, check, or platinum card? The usual one-game suspensions are nothing more than so many hand slaps.

You might not know this, but hanging on a rim in pregame warmups warrants the same fine (\$250) as an ejection for a punching or flagrant foul. Unless stricter penalties for fouls with intent to mutilate are adopted and enforced, folks will insist they went to a fight and saw an NBA game break out. So try this: One violent act draws the obligatory ejection, and the offender is docked 1% of his salary. A second such infraction is met with an automatic heave-ho and a three-game suspension without pay. A third one and the league tells Karl Malone that the guy flattened his tires. Once the goon tactics begin to leave teams shorthanded, they will begin to police themselves.

**4 Crack down on flagrant fouls.** Prior to round two of the 1990 playoffs, operations chief Rod Thorn warned that flagrant offenses would be met with auto-

matic ejections and possible fines, also known as "the Jordan rule." Nice try, perhaps, but the edict was clearly too little, too late. With the average player salary ready to



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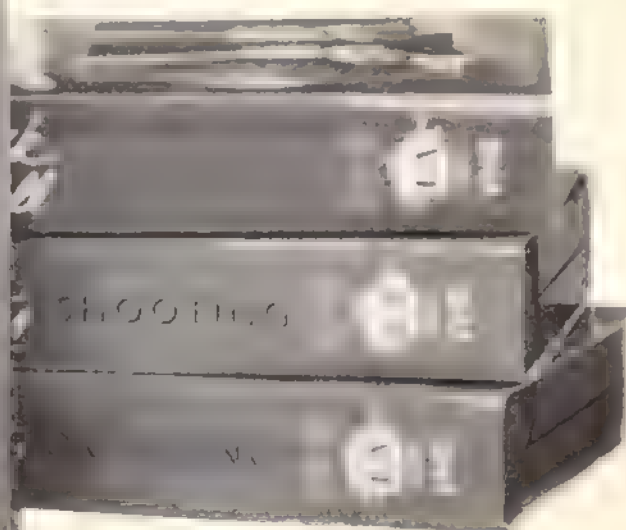
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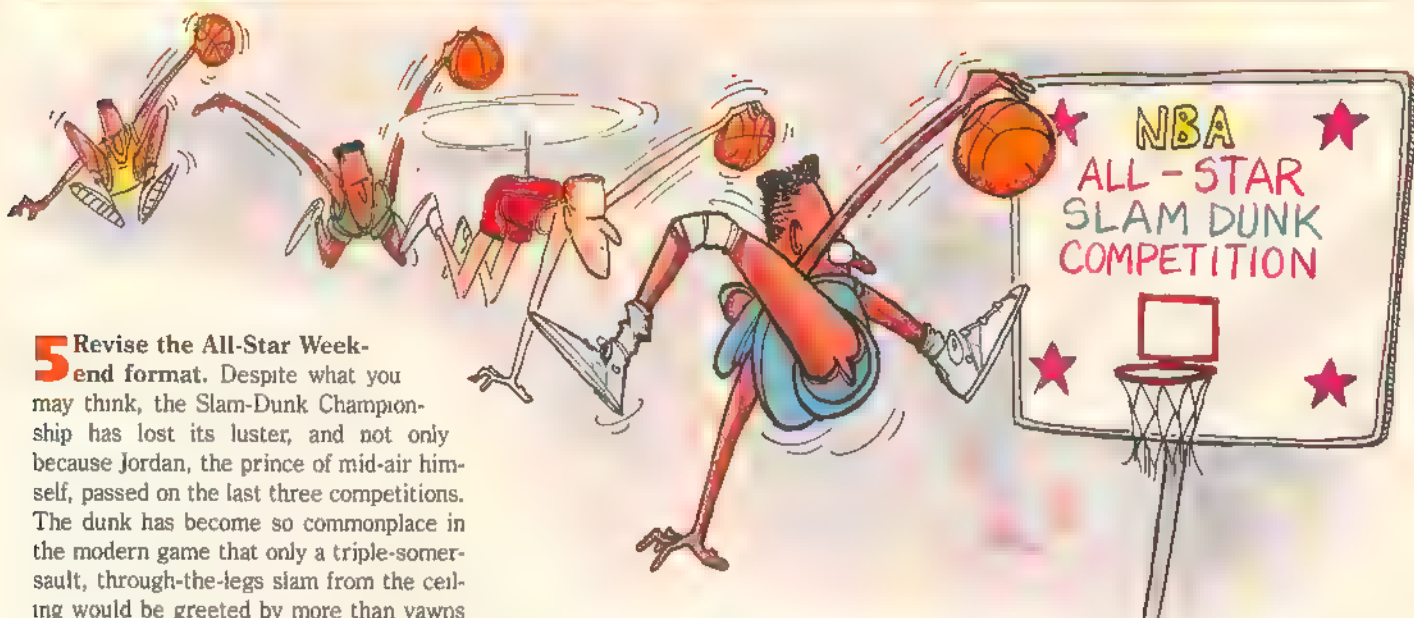
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## **Basketball's Hottest New Instructional Series!**



'Forget these guys—Brown will blow you away with his Human Cannonball Jam.'

**5** **Revise the All-Star Weekend format.** Despite what you may think, the Slam-Dunk Championship has lost its luster, and not only because Jordan, the prince of mid-air himself, passed on the last three competitions. The dunk has become so commonplace in the modern game that only a triple-somersault, through-the-legs slam from the ceiling would be greeted by more than yawns from the majority of participants, judges, and fans alike. Even Mike admits, "As creative as I've tried to be, there's really not much more I can accomplish in the event."

As anticlimactic as the Slam-Dunk Championship and the Long-Distance Shootout have become in recent years, they need to be de-emphasized even more because of the wrongful perception they convey. By glorifying the dunk and rapid-fire three-pointers—which have little, if anything, to do with the sound fundamentals on which winning teams thrive—the NBA sells the sizzle rather than the steak. What does the nation's youth learn when Magic Johnson, for one, isn't good enough to receive an invitation to any such event? *Sorry, kid, you understand the team concept to its fullest, but your whirlybird jam could use some work.*

OK, since the fans love them, keep the Slam-Dunk Championship, the Long-Distance Shootout, and the old-timers game, but add an event of more intrinsic value such as a one-on-one competition between the league's top guns and the All-Defensive team. Yes, we're stealing a page from the National Hockey League, which has adopted the breakaway competition pitting shooters against goalies during its All-Star not-so-extravaganza. I don't know about you, but I'd bet my word processor that more than a few eyes would be glued to the tube to see Scottie Pippen go *mano a mano* with Dennis Rodman—uh, without the two-hand shoves, of course.

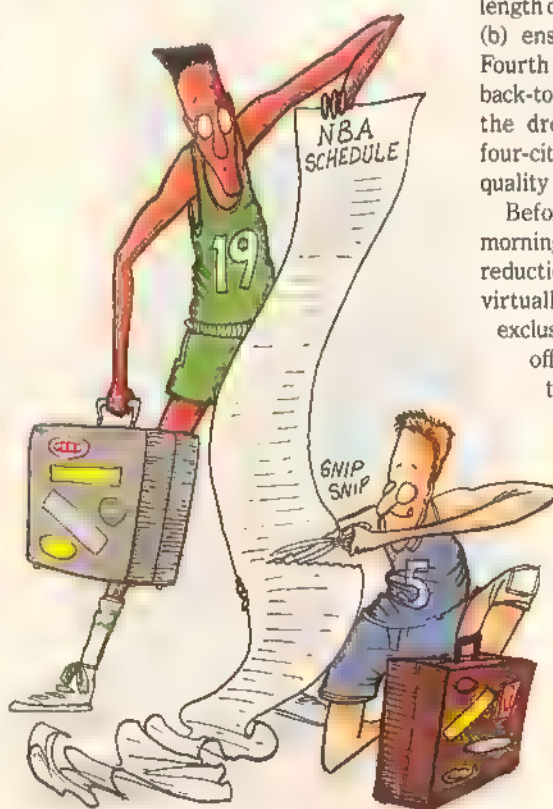
Finally, as the showcase event, have the All-Star squads participate in basketball and anti-drug clinics and then donate the proceeds to league-endorsed charities. Undoubtedly, the message would be a more positive one.

**6** **Shrink the regular season.** A few years back Pat Riley lobbied for a 62-game schedule, reasoning, "The very worst

thing for pro basketball is the huge number of games." Even a more conservative reduction to 70 games would: (a) reduce the length of the regular season by three weeks; (b) ensure that the playoffs end by the Fourth of July; (c) cut back on the number of back-to-back games, and thus put an end to the dreadful four-games-in-six-days-in-four-cities road grind; and (d) enhance the quality of play.

Before club treasurers choke on their morning grapefruits, be assured that the reduction in games could be accomplished at virtually no loss in revenue. The greater exclusivity of the regular season and playoffs could be used as a marketing tool to increase prices at the box office and in radio-television contract negotiations. In the midst of unprecedented wealth, the NBA has never been in better position to rid professional sports of the wretched more-is-more mentality. As Riley put it: "It would be an investment by the owners. Somewhere, to improve the product, you must make the investment. Is the NBA willing to make the investment by cutting the schedule? I think it would be worthwhile."

Listen to the man—his four championship rings outshine even his hair.



'I'll miss that Atlanta-to-San Antonio-to-Boston-to-Utah swing, but we have to sacrifice.'



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**7** Revise the playoff format. Simply put, the first round of the playoffs serves as nothing more than a local fundraiser. Since the adoption of the best-of-five format prior to the 1983-84 season, the higher seed captured 47 of 64 series, a 73% rate of domination. Even more predictable, the seventh and eighth seeds have won but 4 of 32 encounters during the same time span. The Knicks against the Bulls? The Super-Sonics vs. the Trail Blazers? Saddam Hussein had a better chance against Gen. Scharwzkopf.

Trim the post-season field from 16 teams to 12, and give the four division champions a first-round bye. That would not only rid the playoffs of four often-meaningless matchups in the opening round but also reward excellence in the regular-season marathon.



'I worry about getting rusty in that long layoff between the end of the playoffs and the start of next season.'



'Hi, folks. It's your ol' Uncle Elgin back with you again, just like last year, and the year before that, and ...'

**8** Hire Elgin Baylor as the permanent host of the draft lottery. Nothing personal, but we think the Clippers general manager would bring more to the party than Commissioner Stern. As a Hall-of-Famer, Baylor certainly has more name recognition and moves far better off the dribble. As we're sure you know, nobody—but *nobody*—has had more experience in draft lotto.

What's more, Baylor is well aware that the Minnesota franchise is known as the Timberwolves—not the North Stars, as Stern once referred to them. As a former Minneapolis Laker, his promotion would be a positive public relations move. Above all, the change would allow the commissioner to devote more time to more serious business such as, say, whether to serve liver pate or escargot at the All-Star bash.

So here's the deal: If the NBA agrees to take progressive action on these important matters, then we promise not to ask it to widen the court or raise the baskets for at least one more year, OK? ■

PAUL LADEWSKI fantasizes about a 1967 one-on-one competition between Fred Hetzel and Billy Cunningham, and a long-distance shootout between Jim King and Wali Jones.



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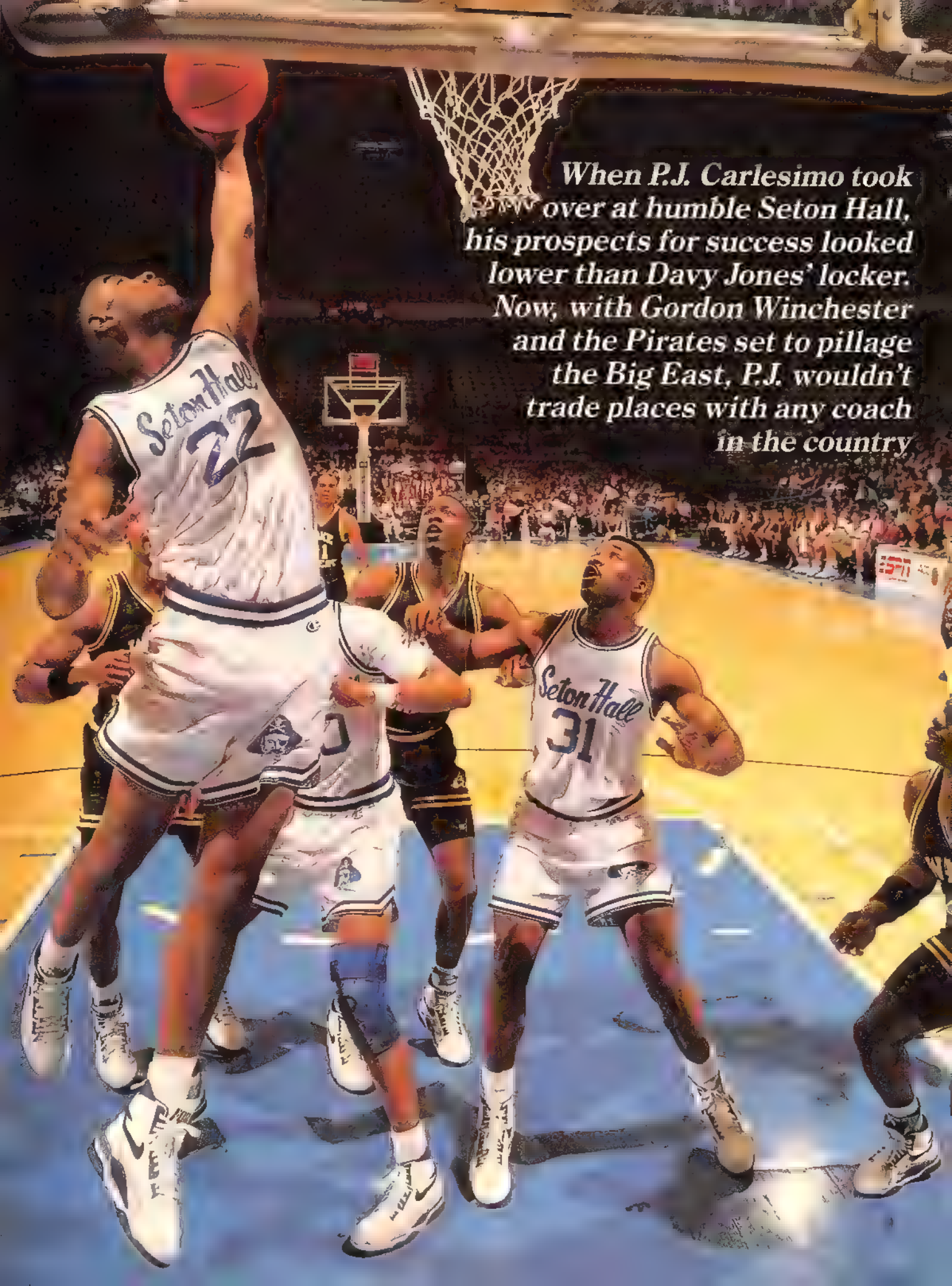
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*When P.J. Carlesimo took  
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Now, with Gordon Winchester  
and the Pirates set to pillage  
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trade places with any coach  
in the country*



# BLUE HEAVEN

By TOM LUICCI

**T**HE DEMANDS THAT LUTHER Wright made were reasonable enough, given the bargaining position inherent in being a 7'2", 290-pound high school senior who can run, jump, score, block shots, and rebound. As he sifted through the more than 200 college basketball scholarship offers he had received, Wright looked for three things. He wanted to play for a nationally prominent program. He wanted to play for a nationally prominent coach. And he wanted to play at a school that had a chance to win a national championship.

Five or six years ago the heralded man-child from Irvington, N.J., probably would have stuffed himself into a plane and headed out of state to find a school that could give him what he wanted. This was the spring of 1990, though, and Wright's decision was as easy as it was obvious: Seton Hall.

Right, Seton Hall.

"I remember when high school coaches wouldn't even take our phone calls," says Mike Brown, now in his seventh year as a Seton Hall assistant. "Not even a phone call. The transformation is amazing—and it's only been a few years. Now we get to choose the players we recruit. Even if it's one of the best players in the country, we have a shot. We don't always get them, but we have a shot."

P.J. Carlesimo, the nationally prominent coach Wright found in his own back yard, has managed to collect enough good players in his 10th season at Seton Hall to make another run at the Final Four this season. If

that happens, it won't be the same charming underdog story as in 1989, when the school made its first Final Four appearance, but it will be the continuation of a remarkable turnaround for a program that in the last decade has gone from one of the worst in the Big East to one of the best in the country. "It's been an incredible thing to watch, and it's mostly all because of P.J.," says Dave Gavitt, the former Big East commissioner and current Boston Celtics president.

How good can this Seton Hall team be? Put it this way: Last season, while still considered a year away with just two seniors, the Pirates went 25-9, won the Big East tournament for the first time ever, and advanced to the NCAA's final eight. National Basketball Association scouts already are keeping close tabs on three Pirates, only one of whom entered this season with more than two starts. There's Wright, who has taken over at center after being academically ineligible as a freshman last year. There's 6'3" sophomore point guard Bryan Caver, a reserve last season but a starter now—and a potential star. And there's 6'4" junior guard Terry Dehere, who merely earned First Team All-Big East honors last season as a sophomore and has reached 1,000 career points faster than any player in Seton Hall history.

In addition, the Pirates return both starting forwards, Gordon Winchester and Arturas Karnishovas, and boast a bench that includes 6'7" Jerry Walker, a former high school All-American, and useful 7-foot, 255-pound sophomore Jim Dickinson, a medical redshirt last year. There also are three acclaimed newcomers: John Leahy, a

6'7" redshirt freshman who nearly earned a starting spot last year before a broken foot the day before the opener cost him the entire season; 6'1" freshman guard Danny Hurley, the younger brother of Duke point guard Bobby Hurley; and 6'8", 260-pound junior-college transfer Darrell Mims.

The difference is that now there are expectations. There never have been before—not in 1988, when Seton Hall earned its first-ever NCAA Tournament bid; not in 1989, when the Pirates went 31-7 and came within a few seconds and a pair of Rumeal Robinson free throws of winning the national championship; and not last year, when Nevada-Las Vegas denied them another Final Four berth. In all three of those seasons the Pirates were picked to finish seventh in the Big East coaches' preseason poll. This year, they're one of the league favorites.

"I didn't pay attention then, and I'm not paying attention now," says Carlesimo. "It won't affect what we do one bit. We'll do the same things we've always done."

**F**OR 10 YEARS NOW, CARLESIMO has been unwavering in the way he approaches the program. Win or lose—and there were more than a few years of the latter—he has maintained the same disposition. Quick-witted, accessible, and with a seemingly inexhaustible energy level when it comes to work, he somehow is always able to make time for people, from the maintenance workers at Walsh Gym on campus to U.S. Olympic coach Chuck Daly, under whom Carlesimo will serve as an assistant this summer. He also has the uncanny ability to get along with all types of people. In the Big East, for instance, his closest friends are Georgetown's John Thompson and Syracuse's Jim Boeheim.

"He's been the same for as long as I've known him," says Seton Hall assistant Tom Sullivan, colleague, co-worker, and longtime friend. "I know how much I hate it when I read how people haven't changed when they become successful, but it's true. He hasn't."

Before games, home or way, it's routine for Carlesimo to come into the press room, grab a cup of coffee and something to eat, and plop down in the middle of the room. It doesn't matter how big the game, either. Last year, prior to the Pirates' West Regional semifinal game with Arizona at the Kingdome in Seattle, Carlesimo made his way from the floor to the press room, filled a plate, and sat down at a table with several writers only a few hours before the game. Just like that—no big deal. More than a few unknowing media types were taken aback by his presence.

"It's just the way he's always been," says



**Wright [back], Leahy, Mims, Hurley [middle], Dehere, and Carlesimo lead P.J.'s Pirates.**

Gavitt. "I remember one time in 1984 when we had our meeting of league officials at Seton Hall. There were 30 officials, plus the supervisor and me, and we walk into Walsh Gym and there's P.J. pulling out the bleachers for us. He's got a couple of boxes of doughnuts under his arm, and he put out all these coffee cups for us. Can you imagine Bobby Knight doing that? But it's no big thing to P.J. It's just the way he is."

Most nights it's not unusual to find the 42-year-old Carlesimo, a bachelor, in his office watching game tapes. That is, when he isn't busy flying off somewhere to scout a prospect, to watch a game, to see a recruit play, or to fulfill a speaking engagement.

"He has an amazing energy level," says college basketball TV analyst Bill Raftery, who spent 11 seasons as head coach at Seton Hall. "He doesn't mind taking a five-hour flight, going to see someone, then turning around and coming right back. I remember one time last summer when we were trying to get together, he said, 'I'll either be in Las Vegas, Phoenix, or Los Angeles.' And that was just in one day."

New Jersey state senator Richard Codey, a longtime Seton Hall supporter and friend of Carlesimo's, recalls the time the Pirates coach flew from Puerto Rico to New Jersey just so he could vote for Codey in a primary election. After doing his civic duty he turned around and flew back to Puerto Rico.

Typically, Carlesimo spent most of last summer abroad, almost all of it on basketball-related business. He scouted the European championships for Daly and the Olympic team in Italy, then did some site checking in Barcelona. He also coached the U.S. team to the gold medal at the World University Games, a two-week event in Sheffield, England. Then he came back and headed to Scotland for a week on a golf outing with Big East coaches and personnel.

His basketball travels alone have taken him to 12 different countries, made him internationally known, and produced more than a few good players in return. Ramon Ramos, the starting center on the 1989 Final Four team, was discovered when Carlesimo was coaching in Puerto Rico. Andrew Gaze, an Australian Olympian and a starter on the '89 team, became interested in Seton Hall when Carlesimo took the Big East All-Star team on a tour of Australia in 1987. He has had players from Italy and Israel, and currently has a starting forward, Karnishovas, who is from Vilnius, Lithuania.

"We don't actively recruit foreign players," Carlesimo says. "It's just that we're not particularly about where someone is from. As it's turned out, most of the foreign players we've had have recruited themselves."

Where Carlesimo has recruited actively is talent-rich New Jersey. In a state long known for exporting athletic talent, Carlesimo has persuaded the local kids to stay home. Caver, Wright, Dehere, Hurley, Leahy, and Walker are all former New Jersey all-state players.

The state, in turn, has responded as never before for a college team. Seton Hall, a Catholic school with a total enrollment of 9,400 located in South Orange, N.J., is expected to crack the NCAA's top 10 in average home attendance this year. The school, which plays at the 20,039-seat Meadowlands Arena, anticipates averaging more than 16,000 per game at home this year.

**T**O APPRECIATE JUST WHAT that means, a little background is in order. In 1982-83, Carlesimo's first season as Seton Hall's coach, the Pirates went 6-23 overall and 1-15 in the Big East, and arguably were the worst team in conference history. The lack of on-court quality was matched by conditions off the court, too. The shower room at creaky, musty Walsh Gym was cramped, the weight room was in the next town, and the basketball coach's office was commandeered periodically by a campus organization that shared his claim to the space.

"None of that ever bothered P.J.," says Brown, who served as an assistant during Carlesimo's first six campaigns at Seton Hall, then coached at Central Connecticut

State for three years before returning this season. "He just went about his business and did what he had to do. It was just something else that had to be worked around."

Things improved, but not quickly. In Carlesimo's first three seasons the Pirates went 4-44 in Big East play and 25-60 overall. In his first five years Seton Hall was 11-69 in conference play and endured a stretch in which it lost 40 of 41 Big East road games. Carlesimo's first winning season also came in that fifth season, 1986-87. Seton Hall went 15-14, and Carlesimo finally had the personnel to begin carrying out what has become the program's trademark: tough, relentless man-to-man defense.

However, after five years, patience among some of the school's supporters was wearing thin. The following season Seton Hall failed to live up to expectations heightened by the previous year's success. With the Pirates treading water at 13-9 in early February, Carlesimo, then in the last year of his contract, became the target of the fans' wrath. He was booed at home games, cursed at, trashed on the local radio talk shows, and at one point that month became headline news in the school's newspaper when the student senate called for his dismissal.

If it ever affected him, got to him, bothered him, Carlesimo never once let on or lashed back. Before games he was the same. After games, as there is now, there was always the same late-night dinner get-together at a local Italian restaurant, home or on the road. Opposing coaches were invited, as were friends, school administrators, even some media. Win or lose, it was the same: Dinner is on for 11 tonight.

"Losing wears on you, but you always have to look ahead," says Carlesimo, who has posted a 90-45 record in the past four years. "That time was difficult on my family, and it made it tough to recruit, but the feelings were never anti-team. They were always anti-me. As long as that was the case I could deal with it. What could I do anyway? It's the same thing as people cheering for you: You've still got a job to do, and you can't let things get in the way of it." That '87-88 team responded to win eight of its next 10 and earn the school's first NCAA Tournament bid. Seton Hall wound up 22-13 that season, the school's first 20-victory season in 32 years, and Carlesimo was rewarded with a new contract.

"He always felt that, given the time, he would get it done," says Sullivan. "He's got a great deal of confidence in himself when it comes to facing challenges. He was always very professional about that whole time. I think it was more because he sees the big picture, rather than one game or one loss here or there. He knew he was making progress with the program and working as



hard as anyone could possibly work to get it turned around."

The following season Carlesimo turned it all the way around. The Pirates went 31-7 and made the Final Four, where only a controversial foul call allowed Michigan's Robinson two free throws to win the national championship in overtime. Carlesimo was named college basketball's coach of the year, but that didn't ease the sting of coming so close.

Even then, though, not a complaint—not

from Carlesimo or his players. "That's one reason so many people like and respect him," says Raftery. "He has always been able to handle the downside of things without showing weakness or bitterness or being unnerved. With all the havoc that has gone on around him, he's always handled it in a classy manner. That tells you something about him."

So does this: Immediately following that Final Four season, Carlesimo was offered the Kentucky job, at a substantial pay

increase. The prestige probably interested him more than the money, but neither was enough to move him from Seton Hall.

**I**T IS, AFTER ALL, HOME NOW. THE oldest of 10 children, Carlesimo has most of his family living close to campus, including his parents, Lucy and Peter, the former executive director of the NIT. More than that, he has built a program from scratch and made his job a pretty good one. All of the school's facilities are state of the art now, from the locker room to the weight room to the coaches' offices. All the support systems are in place. And people know about Seton Hall now: Three NCAA Tournament trips the past four years. One Final Four, one final eight. Four national television appearances this season alone. A nationally prominent coach.

"Coming back after missing those three years, I realized that a lot has changed but a lot also hasn't changed," says Brown. "The way P.J. does things and treats people is still the same. It's now a big-time college program with that same Seton Hall homeyness. In some ways I look around and see how the school and the program have grown up. And then I see the same people and a lot of the same things that I've always liked about the school."

That's just the way Carlesimo wants to keep it. His courtside demeanor sometimes surprises people. He's an in-your-face screamer and a disciplinarian, quick to yank any player for a single defensive lapse. All that changes after the games, however; it's not unusual for Carlesimo, admittedly an emotional person, to be brought to tears after the final game of the season. It happened last year again.

"He gets very involved with the players," says Sullivan. "That's what it's all about with P.J., the bonding with the players through the course of a season and a career. That's why he cries sometimes, and that's why his players keep coming back every year to visit and say hello. They all seem to stay in touch."

It is, in many ways, just an extension of Carlesimo's family. "I like the school, I like the people, and I enjoy my job," he says. "I'm happy where I am, doing what I'm doing. I always felt this would be the perfect job for me if we could ever get it going."

"You always hear about this job opening or that one, but I happen to like it right where I am. I don't want to go anywhere else. All I want to do is to sustain this now, and I'll be happy."

*TOM LUICCI has covered the Seton Hall beat so long he still has his typewriter and carbons from the old days. This is Tom's first piece for INSIDE SPORTS.*

## BREAK OUT THE PEACH BASKETS

**T**HESE DAYS THE SETON HALL Pirates have all the trappings of a big-time college basketball program. There's the 20,039-seat Meadowlands Arena, where almost all the home games are played now; the modern weight room, which is directly across the hall from the plush new locker room; four national television appearances this year alone, a radio network, and, of course, the recent success: Three NCAA Tournament bids in the past four years, a Final Four berth in '89, the final eight last year.

Seton Hall is a major player on the national college basketball scene now. The program has everything it needs, or it can get it if it doesn't have it. It wasn't always that way, though, and the bad old days aren't that far gone.

Mike Brown and John Carroll remember. They were there as assistants at the beginning with P.J. Carlesimo, who was hired as Seton Hall's head coach in 1982. They remember how Carlesimo used to have to pack up all his important papers and belongings and vacate his office once a month. That was so the Bayley-Seton League, a women's religious auxiliary group, could hold its monthly meeting in the office it shared with the school's basketball coach.

"It's funny to think of it now," says Carroll, an assistant during Carlesimo's first seven years at Seton Hall and now the head coach at Duquesne, "but I don't remember it being that funny at the time. It was typical of the way things were then. For a few years Seton Hall was in the Big East in name only."

Carroll and Brown also remember how the key to recruiting was to avoid showing the on-campus facilities to prospects. That's because basically there were no on-campus facilities for the team.

Walsh Gym, the crusty, crumbling on-campus arena, once was the largest, most complete basketball facility in all of New Jersey. Of course, that was back in 1939, when the 3,200-seat gym first opened. In Carlesimo's early years, before the school's move to the Meadowlands during the 1985-86 season, that's where Seton Hall played its Big East home games, usually before crowds of 1,500 or so. The bleachers had to be pulled out before games and the intramural players shoed off the court. Behind one basket was a raised stage with a large blue curtain drawn to hide a storage area.

Jim Lampariello, now a vice president of the New Jersey Nets but then the school's sports information director, says Walsh Gym was "a television production nightmare" during Carlesimo's first few years. That's no small problem in a league as TV-oriented as the Big East. Lampariello remembers how the TV signal used to go black—and for long stretches—on games from Walsh because the old gym's ancient wiring couldn't handle the power surge. He also remembers how the problem was solved: by running a long extension cord to a nearby building that could handle the power needs.

Another problem with Walsh was that the locker room was so small the players had to dress and shower in shifts. And if they wanted to lift weights? No problem—just hop into the car and drive to a health spa in the next town that served as the basketball program's weight room.

Little wonder that during one stretch Brown, now in his second go-around as an assistant under Carlesimo, tried to recruit Mark Jackson, Rod Strickland, and David Rivers but wound up instead with people such as Kenny Powell, who still holds the Big East record for turnovers in a season. "It was a tough sell at the beginning," he says.

Eventually, Walsh was renovated and totally refurbished, with new offices, an expanded locker room, and a new weight room. However, for the two years while construction was going on in the mid-1980s, Seton Hall's non-conference home games had to be played somewhere else. Where? At an ice rink called South Mountain Arena.

During those games the building was so cold it wasn't uncommon to see the players wearing sweaters at courtside. When the maintenance crew tried to solve the problem and raise the temperature, the ice melted, and the resultant flood caused Seton Hall to move a game with Army back to Walsh, amid all the construction.

On the court, things weren't much better. Nine years later, though, Seton Hall only dismantles other teams. It's a national power, a major program with success, some NCAA Tournament history, and a considerably different image. Now Brown makes sure to show the facilities to all the recruits, most of whom are on everyone's top 100 lists. "It's been an amazing, incredible transformation," he says. □ —T.L.

# The C-B-S Network



*Craig, Bob, and Scott—as in Patrick, Johnson, and Bowman  
—gave Mario Lemieux and crew everything they needed*



THE PITTSBURGH PENGUINS were ready to enjoy an oh-so-glorious winter of content as they defended their first Stanley Cup—and then it happened. “Badger Bob” Johnson, who was to the Pens’ championship what Thomas Edison was to the light bulb, complained of fatigue while coaching Team USA last summer prior to the Canada Cup tournament. Tests revealed two brain tumors, and in September Johnson underwent surgery to remove one tumor and radiation therapy to eradicate the second. A month later Scotty Bowman had left the Penguins front office and was coaching the team, virtually against his will.

Just like that, the magnificent hockey experiment concocted by Penguins general manager Craig Patrick was severed by a surgeon’s scalpel. Johnson, Patrick, and Scotty Bowman no longer would weave the cerebral magic that propelled Pittsburgh during the 1990-91 season.

Who could forget the day Patrick hired the ebullient Johnson as coach and the sly Bowman as director of player development? Cynics chuckled that it was the height of stupidity for the diffident Patrick to hire not one but two dominant personalities, either of whom would pull a *coup d’état* faster than you can say “Mikhail Gorbachev.”

The thinking went this way: It would only be a matter of days before the defense-minded Johnson would be driven up one wall by all-offense defenseman Paul Coffey and up the other wall by Mario (It’s My Team and We Don’t Need a Coach) Lemieux. While all this was going on, Badger and Scotty also would be plotting the overthrow of Craig.

Right? Wrong, Bowman insists. “Nobody was looking over the other’s shoulder,” he says. “Nobody was trying to get anybody’s foot in the door. We were a team.”

They were indeed. Instead of undermining one another, Craig, Bob, and Scotty—the C-B-S network—melded into one of major league hockey’s most creative and productive trios. Instead of backstabbing they collaborated and became an innovative think tank. Instead of bickering they created a balance of power rare for a general staff. Instead of jousting for the spotlight they subdued the urge for attention—and ended up getting it anyway. The result: The triumvirate not only won a Stanley Cup but built a club that could remain powerful through the decade.

“The trick,” says Bowman, “was that Craig made it clear right at the start that if something came up and I wanted to provide input, he understood. And when it came to me working with Bob, he always gave me the right time.”

A Penguins insider reveals how the trio successfully interacted: “They all had the highest admiration for one another, but Craig was the quiet catalyst, just as he was with the 1980 [gold medal-winning] Olympic team. He kept them together; he was the glue that bound Scotty and Badger together.”

The success scenario unfolded on a spring day in 1990 before an overflow crowd in Pittsburgh’s Igloo Club. Patrick walked to the head table flanked by Johnson and Bowman, his new general staff. “We now have here in Pittsburgh the best management team in the National Hockey League,” Patrick said in what for him was an extraordinarily vigorous assertion. Lemieux and teammates Tom Barrasso, Phil Bourque, Troy Loney, and Jay Caufield sat in a corner with contented grins on their faces. “Well,” said Barrasso, “we’ve got no excuses now.” To which Lemieux added, “There’s no doubt that Johnson is a great coach.”

So what? The Penguins always had more excuses than Mario had points. They had never won a Cup and never finished first in the club’s 24-year existence. The Pens had been the monarchs of mediocrity: They had gone through 12 coaches and nine general managers since the team was organized in 1967 and made the playoffs just once in the span of the 1982-83 and ’88-89 seasons. Even The Gold Dust Twins, Lemieux and Coffey—supreme talents (and egoists) but dubious team players—had been unable to get them out of the Patrick Division playoffs.

“Before Johnson,” says one NHL scout, “the Penguins were the ultimate one-way team. The most important thing was not where they were in the standings but what each individual guy’s scoring record happened to be. The only way Bowman and Johnson could turn it around is if they did their own thing and not gun for Patrick’s job.”

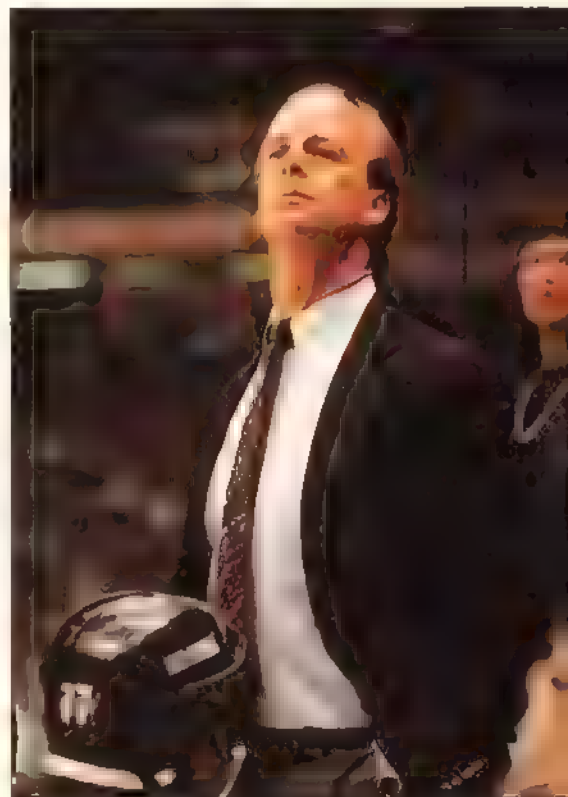
There was every reason to believe, however, that Bowman and Johnson had loftier aspirations. Scotty, who nearly had become the New York Rangers boss a year earlier, loved power. So did Johnson, who in 1989, while still the czar of USA Hockey, was a top candidate for the Hartford Whalers general managership. “I gave up on being a general manager,” Johnson said last season, “because I realized it meant living in one city 12 months of the year. My wife and I always preferred being in Colorado in the summer. The more I found out about being a GM, the more I wanted to coach.” Meanwhile, Bowman had gone the television route, commenting for “Hockey Night in Canada” while evaluating the NHL front-office positions that continually emerged.

When Scotty took the Pittsburgh job,

some league insiders believed Bowman would be GM by December, March at the latest, but on March 27, 1991, the Penguins clinched first place in the Patrick Division and—lo and behold—Patrick was still sitting comfortably in his office at the Igloo, more secure than he had been in September. Bowman was minding his business at his bastion near Buffalo, while Badger had made good on his promise to return to his first love, coaching, and stay there.

WHY WERE NO KNIVES AIMED, let alone thrown? Simple: The public’s perception of a back-biting trio had nothing to do with reality. Cynical hockey administrators and the mean-spirited media were dead wrong about Patrick, Bowman, and Johnson. Nobody wanted anyone else’s job. “Bob really wanted to go back and be a coach,” says his wife, Martha, “because he knew that that was what he does best.”

Johnson did it slowly—after all, reconstituting an all-for-me hockey club isn’t as easy as tossing “Instant New Penguin” in the microwave and pulling out the well-seasoned result five minutes later—but relentlessly. For starters, he infused a large dose of his enthusiasm (“Every day is a great



**Patrick: ‘The quiet catalyst’ of the front-office success.**

day for hockey”) into the previously soporific dressing room. Then he got down to particulars.

“What I wanted,” Johnson says, “was to get them to play the game faster and better





### Mario brought the crowd to its feet and the Stars to their knees.

than the opponent." Speed was no problem, not with Coffey quarterbacking the defense and with a galloping offense led by such colts as Kevin Stevens, Mark Recchi, and—when he was healthy—Mario the Magnificent. However, to the dismay of the entire organization, Lemieux was afflicted with back problems so serious the big guy was out of action from the start of the 1990-91 season until the end of January. "I had to teach them how to play without the best player," says Johnson, "but I never mentioned not having Mario around."

In defiance of logic and the critics, Johnson's plan worked. Minus Mario, the Penguins became a team. While Johnson waited for the chemistry to emerge, he honed the youthful skills of Recchi and Stevens. Meanwhile, Patrick gave Badger a promising package of raw talent in Jaromir Jagr, Pittsburgh's No. 1 draft pick in 1990. In a trice Johnson made the huge Czech one of his prize projects. "You don't get an 18-year-old kid out of Czechoslovakia who can hardly speak English, move him right into an NHL lineup, and expect him to be a hit right away," says Czech expatriate Peter Stastny of the New Jersey Devils, "but Jagr did a super job with Pittsburgh. You have to give the coach credit for that."

Nevertheless, Johnson agonized from the start over what he perceived as his Penguins' major flaw: defense. He made this clear to Patrick, who not only listened but acted. Paul Stanton, an eight-round 1985 draft pick from the University of Wisconsin, was added, along with Larry Murphy, Gord Roberts, and Peter Taglianetti. In the reserve bank Patrick had a Korean whiz-kid, Jim Paek, who would bail out the back line in

the Cup Finals. "We knew we had to change our defense," says Patrick. "There was a lack of success in that department, so we decided to make changes."

Patrick waited until the 11th hour of the NHL trading deadline last March before making his most meaningful move. In an especially daring trade, he dispatched offensive defenseman Zarley Zalapski and gifted young center John Cullen to Hartford for center Ron Francis and defenseman Ulf Samuelsson.

What made the move so chancy was Patrick's return on the deal. After all, Zalapski still had Norris Trophy potential, and Cullen conceivably could win the Art Ross Trophy someday, but Francis had been such a leadership disappointment in Hartford that coach Rick Ley had ripped the captain's "C" off his jersey. Some suspected that Francis might be over the hill. Even more questionable was the second piece in the puzzle: Samuelsson, a Swedish defenseman whose major claim to fame until then had been clobbering a Maple Leaf Gardens Zamboni machine so hard with his stick that the Toronto club sued for damages. In addition, Samuelsson had recently damaged his leg, so there was even more reason for concern. No matter, though. Vague Craig was sure about this one.

"It's funny," says Patrick. "When I was general manager of the Rangers, they called me 'Stand Patrick.' I made only four changes from day one to the end—over five years. At Pittsburgh I changed half the faces in a year and a half."

With Francis and Samuelsson bolstering the lineup, the Penguins exploded past the Rangers and annexed first place in the Patrick Division. After the March 4 deal Pittsburgh went 9-2-2 and made up a 12-point deficit on the Rangers.

Under Johnson, Samuelsson was advised to take no prisoners and hit anyone who crossed the blue line—especially if his name happened to be Cam Neely. In the Pittsburgh-Boston Wales Conference finals Ulf followed through so well that he became the first certifiably hated Swede in Boston Garden. One of Ulf's checks was so devastating that Neely limped off the ice with a deep thigh bruise that hobbled him right into this season.

"No foreign player ever got Bruins fans more crazy," says Eddie Andelman, who broadcasts in Boston on WEEI. "Usually it's the other way around—the big bad Bruins beating up on people—but Samuelsson was really a piece of work."

Of course, the Penguins never would have reached the Wales finals if not for Barrasso's goaltending, which was another case of the C-B-S triumvirate working to a "T." Scotty



Pittsburgh's victory celebration was all the sweeter for being totally unexpected.



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MONEY BACK GUARANTEE



**Did you see 'em too? Bowman trusted Barrasso's grit in goal.**

originally had made Tall Tom his first draft choice in 1983 when Bowman still was running the Buffalo Sabres. Barrasso says, "Behind the bench Scotty is the best coach I've ever seen in my life." Bowman knew how good the goaltender could be under proper tutelage, and he made sure Patrick knew, too. "It was all part of our policy of sharing information," says Craig.

As soon as Barrasso arrived in Pittsburgh, Badger proceeded to build the goalie's confidence as never before. "I told anybody who would listen that we would go as far as Tommy would take us in the playoffs," says Johnson. "Nobody has ever won the Stanley Cup without terrific goalkeeping, and that's what Tommy gave us." Barrasso never fulfilled those expectations more than in Game 4 of the Penguins-Capitals Patrick Division finals. Pittsburgh was reeling under a hail of shots that should have produced at least three goals, but Barrasso allowed but one.

That's when another prodigy delivered. Stevens, who earlier had rallied Pittsburgh against New Jersey,

scored a goal for the ages against Washington.

With the score 1-1 late in the third period, Stevens attached himself to the puck along the right boards near the corner of the rink. Between Stevens and goalie Don Beaupre stood Capitals captain Rod Langway, arguably the best defenseman in such a strategic

situation. "Stevens didn't have any options other than a pass out," says Penguins veteran Bryan Trottier. "I mean, he was pretty much trapped."

No way. Stevens bum-rushed Langway, forced his way to the crease, skedaddled around the transfixed Beaupre, and completed the perfect play by banking the puck off the far left post over the goal line. A more muscular goal has never been scored.

The Penguins front office negotiated one other deft move that paid double dividends. Just before midseason Patrick dispatched awkward defenseman Jim Kyte to Calgary for 32-year-old Czech Jiri Hrdina, although Jiri had played only 14 of the Flames' first 30 games and had but three assists. Hrdina became the ideal chaperone for his countryman, Jagr, but more importantly, when the Penguins needed a big goal in Game 7 of the opening round against New Jersey, Hrdina bedeviled the Devils by scoring two, including the series winner.

During the regular season Bowman remained the least obtrusive of the Three Penguin-teers. His role was that of player evaluator, and he did that well. Once the playoffs began, however, Craig drew more heavily on Scotty's wisdom. During the Penguins' survival battle with the Devils, Bowman started by scouting the Rangers-Capitals series. When Washington conveniently disposed of the Rangers in six games, Scotty drove to New Jersey just in time to join the braintrust for Game 6 of the series, with Badger's boys trailing three games to two.

Whereas other coaches might have trouble accepting a Bowman's intrusion, Badger



**The addition of Francis, an excellent two-way player, lifted the Penguins.**



welcomed whatever input he could get from Scotty. "Bob was easy to work with," says Bowman. "He's an outgoing guy, and he gave me free rein. I tried to do for him what Toe Blake once did for me. When I coached the Canadiens, Blake [who once won five



**Bowman: 'Nobody tried to look over anybody else's shoulder.'**

straight Stanley Cups) was always around to give me the kind of input I needed. Having once been a coach, I knew my parameters with Bob. For both of us, it was a happy undertaking."

One of Bowman's best theories is "Use all your best in a crisis." That crisis developed in the opening round when Barrasso was injured and the Penguins entered Game 6 against New Jersey down three games to two and playing at the Meadowlands. Frank Pietrangolo started in goal for the Pens and immediately gave up a cheap goal, dropping his club down 1-0. Johnson got the message, and out of the chute flew the Penguins' best five-man unit. "No question," says Bowman. "We took over."

The "we" essentially was Lemieux and Stevens, who for a white-hot 10 minutes put on their capes and became Supermen on skates. In no time at all they perforated the Devils defense and had Pittsburgh ahead to stay. "Scotty was pleased that Badger listened and was just as pleased that the strategy worked," says a Bowman confidante. "You could see a smile on Scotty's face after Pittsburgh won that game. He felt a part of it, and he was."

So was Patrick, who had been like a nephew to Bowman since Scotty's first major league job in St. Louis in 1967, when Craig's father, Lynn, hired Scott to manage the new franchise. (Craig's grandfather, Lester, created the first Rangers dynasty in the late 1920s, and his Uncle Muzz—Lynn's brother—was both GM and coach of the Rangers. Obviously, the NHL bloodlines are pure.)

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"Harry Sinden is my idol," says Patrick, referring to Boston's well-respected general manager. "I like the way he keeps the Bruins in the top four or six teams in the league all the time, the way he changes people and stays up there. Someday 20 years from now, I'd be happy if I could say I was the next Harry Sinden."

**W**HEN PATRICK took over the Penguins early in the 1989-90 season, Pittsburgh players were just happy he wasn't Gene Ubriaco or Tony Esposito, the coach and general manager, respectively, who had been constant targets of player grumbling. Once, after Esposito traded Rod Buskas, the Penguins mutinously showed up for the next practice wearing black arm-bands. That said it all for the Espo regime. Out went Tony and Gene, and in came Craig as 20 Penguins danced for joy in the dressing room. "I feel like I'm an 18-year-old kid again," said Coffey.

The Penguins were equally tickled about Bowman's addition because they understood that his input—along with Johnson's and Patrick's—would give the high command hockey acumen to match that of any general staff in the league. "Scotty," says hockey commentator Don Cherry, "knows more of what's going on in the league than 99% of the guys."

"He never forgets. You can bring up a player on St. Louis [in the late 1960s], and he could name the 12 guys on the ice—and who was where. And how many guys can say they've won five Stanley Cups?"

Bowman admits he could have taken earlier job offers, with either the Rangers or the Nordiques, but bowed to family considerations. He had settled permanently near Buffalo with his wife, Suella. They have five children, one of whom, David, 19, attends a school for the blind in Batavia, N.Y. "David has always been a strong consideration for me," says Bowman. "I didn't want to relocate, and when Craig offered the job he made it clear that I could be based at home. The job combined what I had been looking for, since I could do my own thing. What I didn't want was to work 24 hours a day, 365 days a year."

Duty called last October, however, and Scotty answered. Until then he had provided input for subtle and unsubtle Patrick moves that, step by step, enabled Pittsburgh to win



**Johnson ruled the bench, but he profited from Bowman's playoff experience.**

the NHL championship, including the Francis-Samuelsson deal and the following acquisitions:

- **Trottier:** The ex-Islander was a vital substitute for ailing Lemieux. In Game 6 of the Finals against Minnesota, Torts won the draw that led to Samuelsson's game-winning (and Cup-winning) shot.

- **Jagr:** The mammoth forward saved the Penguins as early as Game 2 of the opening round. Trailing one game to none, the Pens staggered into the overtime at the Igloo and were being clearly outplayed until Jagr scored a spectacular winner.

- **Joe Mullen:** After slowly recuperating from a neck injury, the former Flame came through with eight goals and nine assists for 17 playoff points.

- **Roberts:** The think tank decided to sign a defender the Blues had rated as washed-up. Roberts emerged as one of the league's steadiest backliners through the regular season and playoffs.

"All things considered," says Sinden, "the Samuelsson-Francis trade was the big move that turned the team up to the top of the league." Perhaps, but it was more than that. Badger coaxed a career year out of Recchi. No less significant was the fact that former rebels such as Coffey, Barrasso, and Lemieux found a high command they could respect.

The troika provided stability, and in the end it was Coffey's indomitable spirit—which drove him back into the playoffs despite a serious eye injury—Barrasso's clutch goaltending, and Lemieux's Smythe Trophy performance as the playoff MVP that irrevocably tilted the Cup in Pittsburgh's direction. Patrick must have figured

Bowman rated an award as well, because he did the unthinkable and gave Scotty a full player's playoff share.

All signs pointed to an even more successful sequel in 1991-92 under the triumvirate's guiding hands until the news that the irrepressible coach had suffered two brain tumors struck the Penguins with the force of a thunderclap. Because Johnson's prognosis was hazy, Patrick and Bowman conferred, with the result that the coaching reins were turned over to Scotty, the NHL's all-time winningest coach. However, make no mistake: He's keeping Badger's seat warm, not trying it on for size.

"When he asked me to take over for Bob, I didn't feel as if I was in any position to say no," says Bowman. "Being around Bob for a year was great. Like everyone else, he spilled over on me."

"It's Bob's team, and I'll try to preserve everything Bob did here. It's not like this team doesn't have a formula. I'm just here to guide the team along in Bob's absence."

Nevertheless, all hands agree that Johnson is irreplaceable both to the team and the troika. Because of the C-B-S network, the Penguins enjoyed a unique season in the hockey sun. They had a special chemistry that comes but rarely in a pro team's lifetime—if at all. "Without Badger behind the bench," says an NHL scout, "the Penguins may be a good team, but without him working with Scotty and Craig they'll never be the great team they were in 1991." ■

*STAN FISCHLER doesn't run an NHL club, but his production might convince you that he has three heads. Stan contributed a piece on the Los Angeles Kings in December.*





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# NUMBERS

## FAMILIARITY BREEDS CONTEMPT

Among divisional rivals in the NHL, "to know him is to love him" definitely does not hold true. In a recap of the 1990-91 season's most fight-filled games, eight of the top 10 bouts involved divisional matchups. A Patrick Division battle in early February

between the Philadelphia Flyers and the Washington Capitals led the way; each team logged 147 penalty minutes for a season single-game high of 294. Listed below are the highest single-game penalty minute totals for 1990-91.

Date	Teams-Site	PIM	Breakdown	Division?
2/10/91	Philadelphia-Washington	294	147-147	Yes
3/17/91	St. Louis-Chicago	280	120-160	Yes
3/2/91	Winnipeg-Los Angeles	244	142-102	Yes
12/27/90	Calgary-Edmonton	227	117-110	Yes
3/31/91	Hartford-Boston	210	118-92	Yes

Date	Teams-Site	PIM	Breakdown	Division?
3/23/91	Calgary-Los Angeles	196	100-96	Yes
1/25/91	St. Louis-Detroit	176	74-102	Yes
3/14/91	Chicago-Los Angeles	170	105-65	No
3/16/91	Philadelphia-Washington	170	83-87	Yes
10/19/90	Boston-Edmonton	165	77-88	No

By John Grabowski

## DON'T BE SHY, GUYS

It's no secret that some NBA players shoot more than others, and it's probably no surprise that Chicago's Michael Jordan attempted the most shots during the 1990-91 season. However, total attempts is only one way to measure the willingness to shoot. A more accurate method is to calculate a player's average of shots taken per 48 minutes on the floor, or the equivalent of a standard game. By that measure, Denver's Charles Jackson is voted player most likely to let it fly. Jackson launched 32.2 shots per 48 minutes in 1990-91. MJ, by contrast, finished fourth at 29.1. Listed below are the 10 most willing shooters of 1990-91 (minimum of 500 minutes).

Player, Team	Mins.	FGA	FG	FG Pct.	Atts./48 mins.
Chris Jackson, Nuggets	1,505	1,009	417	41.3	32.2
Bernard King, Bullets	2,401	1,511	713	47.2	30.2
Michael Adams, Nuggets	2,346	1,421	566	39.4	29.1
Michael Jordan, Bulls	3,034	1,837	998	54.9	29.1
Walter Davis, Trail Blazers	1,483	862	403	46.8	27.9
Cedric Ceballos, Suns	730	419	204	48.7	27.6
Gerald Glass, Timberwolves	606	340	149	43.8	26.9
Orlando Woolridge, Nuggets	1,823	983	490	49.8	25.9
Eddie Johnson, SuperSonics	2,045	1,122	543	48.4	25.8
Ricky Pierce, SuperSonics	2,167	1,156	561	48.5	25.0

Of course, there also are players who—whether for lack of inclination or opportunity, or both—take a shot once in a blue moon. For example, the Suns' Ed Neely put up just 97 shots last season; he was the only NBA player with more than 500 minutes and fewer than 100 attempts. However, Neely falls all the way to 10th on the All-Bashful team. Charles Jones of the Bullets averaged just four field goal attempts for every 48 minutes on the court. Listed below are the most reluctant shooters of 1990-91 (minimum of 500 minutes).

Player, Team	Mins.	FGA	FG	FG Pct.	Atts./48 mins.
Charles Jones, Bullets	1,499	124	67	54.0	4.0
Manute Bol, 76ers	1,522	164	65	39.6	5.2
Mark Eaton, Jazz	2,580	292	169	57.9	5.2
Larry Smith, Rockets	1,924	263	126	48.7	6.5
Greg Kite, Magic	2,225	338	166	49.1	7.3
Mark Acres, Magic	1,313	214	109	50.9	7.8
Andrew Lang, Suns	1,152	189	108	57.7	7.9
David Greenwood, Spurs	1,018	169	85	50.3	8.0
Jon Horack, Hawks	1,931	321	116	36.6	8.0
Ed Neely, Suns	573	97	45	46.4	8.1

By Philip Minceley

## TOP-HEAVY ATTACKS

Most NBA teams will have five players scoring in double figures in a given season. (To be considered a double-figure scorer, a player must average at least 10 points per game and play in at least half of his team's games.) In fact, since the 24-second clock was introduced in the 1954-55 season, only 28 teams have had three or fewer players that averaged in double figures. Surprisingly though, half of those teams posted winning records despite their lack of scoring balance, and one—the 1990-91 Chicago Bulls—captured the NBA title. Listed below are those 14 "unbalanced" winners.

Season	Team	Record	Players (Points Per Game)
1958-59	St. Louis Hawks	49-23	Bob Pettit (29.2), Cliff Hagan (23.7), and Clyde Lovellette (14.4)
1959-60	St. Louis Hawks	46-26	Bob Pettit (26.1), Cliff Hagan (24.8), and Clyde Lovellette (20.8)
1976-77	Los Angeles Lakers	53-29	Kareem Abdul-Jabbar (26.2), Cazzie Russell (16.4), and Lucius Allen (14.6)
1976-77	Golden State Warriors	46-36	Rick Barry (21.8), Phil Smith (19.0), and Jamaal Wilkes (17.7)
1976-77	Denver Nuggets	50-32	David Thompson (25.9), Dan Issel (22.3), and Bobby Jones (15.1)
1977-78	San Antonio Spurs	52-30	George Gervin (27.2), Larry Kenon (26.6), and Billy Paultz (15.8)
1978-79	Phoenix Suns	50-32	Pau Westphal (24.1), Walter Davis (23.6), and Alvan Adams (17.8)
1979-80	Atlanta Hawks	56-32	John Drew (19.5), Eddie Johnson (18.5), and Dan Roundfield (16.5)
1982-83	New York Knicks	44-38	Bernard King (21.9), Bill Cartwright (15.7), and Sly Williams (11.9)
1982-83	Denver Nuggets	45-37	Alex English (28.4), Kiki Vandeweghe (26.7), and Dan Issel (21.6)
1987-88	Seattle SuperSonics	44-38	Dale Ellis (25.8), Xavier McDaniel (21.4), and Tom Chambers (20.4)
1987-88	Chicago Bulls	50-32	Michael Jordan (35.0), Charles Oakley (12.4), and Dave Corzine (10.1)
1989-90	Utah Jazz	55-27	Karl Malone (31.0), John Stockton (17.2), and Thurl Bailey (14.2)
1990-91	Chicago Bulls	61-21	Michael Jordan (31.2), Scottie Pippen (17.8), and Horace Grant (12.8)

By Greg Thomas

## CROWDED AIR SPACE

In the 15 years after the NFL began keeping statistical records in 1932, the single-season passing yardage mark fell six times, often by substantial amounts. In 1947 the Washington Redskins' "Singing" Sammy Baugh topped the previous standard by a whopping 31.2% and that yardage record stood for another 13 seasons. Six other passers have surpassed Baugh's mark in the 43 years since then, but only Dan Marino's 5,084-yard effort for the Miami Dolphins in 1984 came close to matching the magnitude of Baugh's feat. Listed below is the evolution of the NFL's single-season passing yardage record and the percentage of increase of each new mark.

Year	Player, Team	Yds.	Pct. of Increase
1932	Arnie Herber, Packers	639	—
1933	Harry Newman, Giants	973	54.3
1936	Arnie Herber, Packers	1,239	21.5
1940	Sammy Baugh, Redskins	1,367	9.4
1941	Cecil Isbell, Packers	1,479	7.6
1942	Cecil Isbell, Packers	2,621	26.8
1947	Sammy Baugh, Redskins	2,938	31.2
1960	Jack Kemp, Chargers	3,187	2.6
1961	George Blanda, Oilers	3,330	9.4
1967	Sonny Jurgensen, Redskins	3,747	11.1
1979	Dan Fouts, Chargers	4,082	8.2
1980	Brian Sipe, Browns	4,132	1.2
1984	Dan Marino, Dolphins	5,084	18.7

\*Compiled in the American Football League  
By John Grabowski

## PLAYOFF PANSIES

Talk about letting the air out of the balloon. During the 1990-91 season the Houston Rockets set a club record with 52 victories. Nevertheless, they were swept in the first round of postseason competition, losing three straight to the Los Angeles Lakers.

There have been 10 teams in NBA history that won better than 60% of their regular-season contests but could not manage to win a single game in the playoffs. The all-time winners—or losers—were the Rochester Royals of 1949-50, who won at a 75% clip during the regular season but dropped two and disappeared in the playoffs. Listed below are the NBA's winningest losers.

Season	Team	Regular-Season Record	Playoff Pct. Record
1949-50	Rochester Royals	51-17	75.0 0-2
1968-69	Baltimore Bullets	57-25	69.5 0-4
1971-72	Chicago Bulls	57-25	69.5 0-4
1952-53	Syracuse Nationals	47-24	66.2 0-2
1990-91	Houston Rockets	52-30	63.4 0-3
1948-49	Chicago Stags	38-22	63.3 0-2
1988-89	Utah Jazz	51-31	62.2 0-3
1953-54	New York Knicks	44-28	61.1 0-4
1986-87	New York Knicks	50-32	61.0 0-2
1950-51	Philadelphia Warriors	40-26	60.6 0-2

By Greg Thomas



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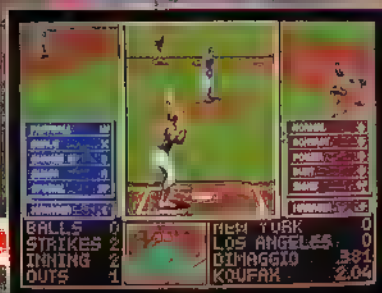
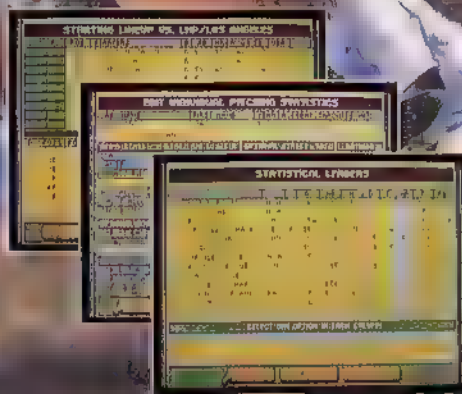
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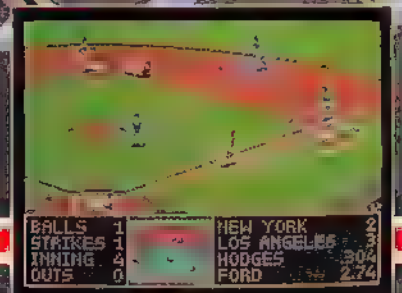
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W.H., DES MOINES

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**N**orm Charlton claims he hit Mike Scioscia with a pitch on purpose. Did you approve of Charlton being suspended?

T.L., FULLERTON, CALIF

I would approve of Charlton being suspended in a dunking booth at a carnival, with Scioscia getting nine balls for a quarter.

**H**ockey is the hottest thing in Florida these days, and no doubt the team will become more popular than those football-playing fools, the Bucs. But whose idea was it to call this team the Tampa Bay Lightning? What would you have named them?

S.S., MABLETON, GA

The Tampa Bay Pucks.

**D**an Patrick is my favorite sportscaster on ESPN, especially when he says "Gone!" after a home run. Is he one of your favorites, too?

B.L., LEESBURG, VA.

Usually, yes. Tragically for Dan, however, this "Gone!" thing has gone to his head. He goes home at night, eats dinner, cleans his plate, and says, "Gone!" He takes a shower, watches the water go down the basin, and says, "Gone!" He mows the lawn, looks at the blades of grass disappearing, and says, "Gone!" Years ago, it was this very same bedside manner with terminally ill patients that led to Dan's leaving med school.

**I**siah Thomas and Bill Laimbeer were unhappy at being excluded when the U.S. Olympic men's basketball squad originally was announced. Why weren't they selected?

J.M., McCANDLESS, PA.

Thomas was left off the team, sources say, because of his strained relationship with Michael Jordan. Laimbeer was left off the team, sources say, because he is Bill Laimbeer.

**D**idn't you think those anti-celebration rules in the National Football League got to be a little ridiculous?

P.T., OLNEY, MD.

You bet, particularly when the NFL demanded five-yard penalties be called for the following: Shaking hands; giving high fives;

giving low fives; giving high threes; saying, "Yay!"; blowing a kiss to your wife; telling a teammate, "Nice tackle"; crushing a paper cup after drinking some Gatorade; throwing a football into the stands; throwing a football at your wife; smiling with your teeth showing; mentioning the name of the losing team in an interview; and having the gall to say to an opponent: "Have a nice day."

**S**an Jose Sharks? What does anybody know about ice hockey in San Jose, man?

K.H., KENSINGTON, CONN.

They know enough that they'll probably win a Stanley Cup before the Los Angeles Kings ever do.

**F**idel Castro doing the wave was just about the funnest thing I have ever seen at a sports event. How about you?

P.H., IOWA CITY, IOWA

Mmmm. I would have to vote for Queen Elizabeth shaving "England" into her scalp at the World Cup soccer tournament.

**R**uffian, the late, great filly, is the subject of a very compelling best-selling book. Have the publishers been pleased with the book's popularity?

W.N., NASHUA, N.H.

Sure have. And a special thanks goes out to Ruffian's opponent in the great match race, Foolish Pleasure, whose appearances on the "Today" show with Bryant Gumbel boosted book sales remarkably. Foolish will be doing Jay Leno a week from Wednesday and will be signing racing forms at an upcoming memorabilia show in Kentucky.

**C**olorado is getting big-league baseball at last. How do you think the Rockies will do in their first season?

M.M., DELLWOOD, MO.

In the time-tested tradition of teams from Colorado, the Rockies probably will go all the way to the World Series, then get pounded.

**A**ll of us out-of-state Orioles fans want you to give us the lowdown on that new stadium they're building in Baltimore. What's it supposed to be called?

C.R., WOODFIELD, S.C.

Fans will vote on the following suggestions: Camden Yards, Babe Ruth Park, the Birdhouse, Robby's Roost, the Weaverdome, the Oriole Cookie, the House That Ruth Lived

Near, Bob Irsay Memorial Park, the New Place Where Our Team Plays, the O's Zone, Maryland Square Garden, and—in honor of the nearby commander-in-chief—The Prez Ravine.

**G**ive a little publicity to Harry Gant, will you? Gant totally dominated last year's Winston Cup series.

J.D., ANNISTON, ALA.

I don't pretend to know much about auto racing, but I guess the most amazing thing about Gant to me was how he was able to drive so well and still hit all those homers for the Braves.

**Y**ankees management insisted last season that Don Mattingly, a 30-year-old man with several seasons in the majors, get a haircut. Pretty foolish, eh?

G.M., EDWARDSVILLE, ILL.

On the contrary, Mattingly was the one making a fool of himself, tripping on his hair when he ran the bases, letting it flow down to his ankles that way, walking around looking like Bon Jovi, combing it with a pine-tar rag. Disgusting.

**Q**uebec had a whole heap of trouble signing that Lindros kid to play hockey. What was his problem?

M.B., MANDAN, N.D.

The kid saw what happened to Montreal's baseball stadium. He refused to sign with any team in Quebec until somebody inspected the roof.

**B**o Jackson made a big impression in his late-season appearance with the Chicago White Sox. But tell me: Is it true Bo is doing advertisements now for a store that sells white socks?

J.T., ORONO, MAINE

Of course. Bo knows hose.

**B**efore his last fight Mike Tyson worked on his jab, his uppercut, his left hook, and his right cross. What would you like to see Tyson do with his hands?

D.A., LEAVENWORTH, KAN.

Keep them to himself. ■

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## ACE SPORTS QUIZ

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# THE FAN

By DICK CLARK

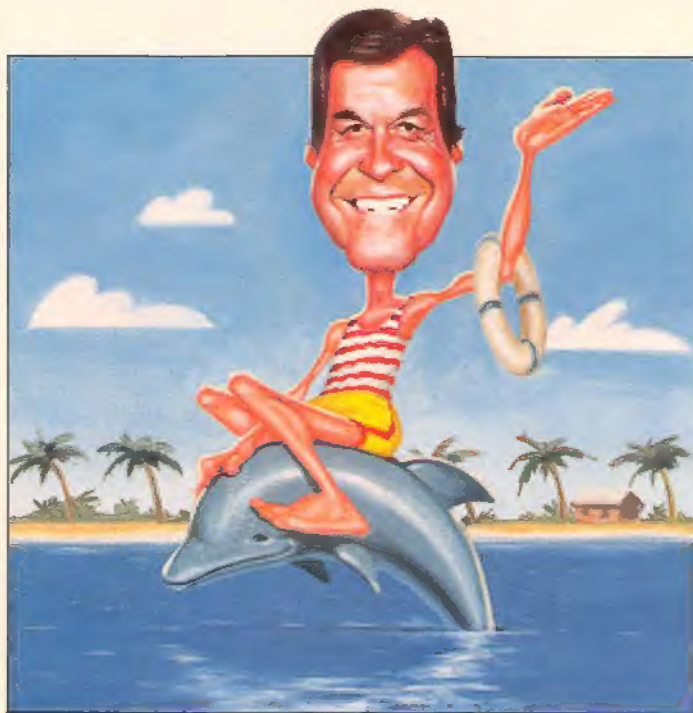
## A Man And His Dolphin

**O**F ALL THE SPORTS I've ever tried, the only one I've always enjoyed and been consistently good at is swimming. It took me awhile, however, to realize this. My brother—a big guy, much bigger than me—was a very good football tackle in high school. Since I idolized him and emulated him in everything he did, I also went out for football.

The only problem: I was 97th on the team. They ran out of uniforms by the time they got to me—literally. I wore my own sweater. I got a pair of pants from the team. I had my own shoes. I had a helmet they didn't even use anymore. The ragtag uniform reflected my poorer-than-poor performance on the field. About the seventh or eighth time the opposing players walked on my head I said, "You know, I don't think I'm cut out for this game."

I weighed about 125 pounds in those days, and football wasn't a great idea for a little guy. So I gave up my dreams of being a football player and went into other things in which I could excel. Swimming was a natural for me because from the time I was an infant I was in the water.

I was born right outside of New York City, and we went to Long Island Sound to do our swimming. My father had a little boat, and we'd swim off it. My earliest memory is of getting thrown overboard. That's how I learned to swim. We'd be out in the middle of the sound, and my dad would put me into a little orange life jacket and tie a rope to it, and in they'd toss me. I'd swim around the boat; if I got into trouble they'd just haul me in. When I think of it now, I realize that my mother was so afraid for me. What that poor woman must have suffered, watching her "baby" hitting the water.



*I still love the water and swimming as much as I did when I was a kid. It gives me exercise in the easiest way, and who wouldn't love swimming with Jojo?*

It sounds cruel, but I never thought so at the time. I was a game little kid, the only one on the boat that never got seasick. When the bad weather came, my whole family would be hanging over the rail, and I'd be sitting there reading comic books and munching on Oreo cookies, having a great time.

Today I have a small water-ski boat on a lake in California. My family's always had fun with it. We swim and water ski, not in any competitive way but just for the sheer enjoyment. I have three kids, and they all swim. They've all been brought up with water sports as a part of their play, though their introduction was a lot different from my own unceremonious toss into Long Island Sound.

I still love the water as much as I did as a kid. We live on the water; we vacation on the water. I don't dive into the Pacific Ocean every day as I did when I was younger because it's so cold, but we go to the Caribbean a lot, and I swim there. I've also discovered something all swimmers do eventually: snorkeling.

We go to a place called Providenciales in the Turks-Caicos Islands every chance we

get. Those islands are incredibly beautiful, a little taste of paradise, with wonderful white sand beaches. Actually, it's a relatively undiscovered chain of 30-some little bits of land about 150 miles east of Cuba. Traveling time is ideal: an hour and 10 minutes by plane from Miami.

There's a dolphin named Jojo that's been living there for 10 years. He comes out and swims with the people. I remember one time there were seven or eight of us splashing around. Jojo came into water that was barely 3½ feet deep and swam around our legs.

We've had a lot of fun with that dolphin. We've been cautioned by marine authorities not to touch him, but he'll play for hours with the divers and swimmers. It's a wonderful experience for all of us who have to live up in the country jungles and the business world.

The water at Providenciales is crystal clear. I like what you see under the water. Snorkeling is a very invigorating experience; the colors and the plant life and the animal life you see are amazing.

Swimming has always been nothing more than personal fun—a private, individual enjoyment—but about 10 years ago I was in a TV special called "US Against the World" as a swimmer. I was on the U.S. team vs. the stars from other countries, and I had to swim against Bo Svenson, a terrific athlete. His advantage was that, being so much taller, his stroke was so much longer. He covered the pool in no time, but I think I beat him. Our team won, and that was a big thrill.

I'm not a crazed swimming enthusiast, but I'm certainly a fan. I like the sport, the pure pleasure of the activity. It gives me exercise in the easiest way, and who wouldn't like swimming with Jojo? ■

*So this is why DICK CLARK never ages: He swims in the Fountain of Youth every day. Later this month Dick will produce and host "New Year's Rockin' Eve" on ABC-TV.*



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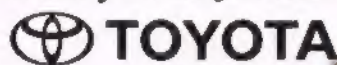
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